The Hand of The Potter

Theodore Dreiser

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THE HAND OF THE POTTER

BOOKS BY THEODORE DREISER

SISTER CARRIE A Novel
JENNIE GERHARDT " "
THE FINANCIER " "
THE TITAN " "
THE GENIUS " "
A TRAVELER AT FORTY
A HOOSIER HOLIDAY
PLAYS OF THE NATURAL AND THE SUPER-NATURAL
THE HAND OF THE POTTER A Tragedy
FREE AND OTHER STORIES

The HAND *of the* POTTER

BY

THEODORE DREISER

A Tragedy in Four Acts

BONI AND LIVERIGHT
NEW YORK 1918

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"'*What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?*'"

OMAR KHAYYAM.

Characters

Aaron Berchansky, *the father, an old Jewish thread peddler.*

Rebecca, his wife.

Isadore—21, Joseph—17 } *their sons*

Masha, *lame, an embroideress by trade*

Rae, *a manicure*

Esther (Mrs. Greenbaum), *an elder sister* } *their daughters.*

George Greenbaum, *Esther's husband.*

Tillie, *the Greenbaums' daughter.*

Kitty Neafie, *aged eleven, daughter of an Irish neighbor.*

Mary Neafie, *her mother.*

Mrs. Lersch, *a neighbor.*

Rutger B. Miller, *Assistant District Attorney.*

The Clerk of the Grand Jury.

CHARACTERS—*Continued*

FOREMAN OF THE GRAND JURY.
A DOORKEEPER.
EMIL DAUBENSPECK, *a German cabinet-maker.*
RUFUS BUSH, *an expressman.*
SAMUEL ELKAS, *keeper of a furnished-room house.*
HAGAR ELKAS, *his daughter.*
THOMAS MCKAGG, *policeman.*
ED ARMSBY, *of the Herald*
STEPHEN LEACH, *of the Times* } *reporters.*
DENNIS QUINN, *of the Sun*
MCGRANAHAN
HARSH } *detectives.*
SKUMM
AN INSPECTOR OF POLICE.
NEIGHBORS.
JURORS.
VOICES.

ACT I

THE HAND OF THE POTTER

ACT I

Scene

The top floor flat of Aaron Berchansky *in the crowded Jewish section of the Upper East Side of New York City. In this instance the dining and living rooms are one. Forward of left center a door, giving out into the general hall, where occasionally noises of tenants going to and fro on the stairs below can be heard. Back of this door a little way, and against the wall, a cheap yellow bookcase filled with more or less shabby books, old magazines and papers. On the top of this bookcase, center, an old-fashioned wooden clock which ticks noisily whenever other sounds cease; to its right, facing it, a five-branch candlestick of brass containing half-burned candles. Right center, a window with a fire-escape giving into a court, and beyond this court the whitewashed wall and window of another apartment, obviously vacant. In the center of the room a general dining and work table*

of the same quality as the bookcase, and on it a red cotton tablecloth, a basket filled with sewing (socks, underwear, buttons), and to one side an inkstand and pen. A few chairs of poor design are scattered about. Right center, against the wall, an old sewing machine, severely battered, with a cheap velour cover on it. On it a samovar of brass. Forward of left center, a door giving into a bathroom. Rear of left center, two doors, one giving into a small bedroom or alcove, the other, beyond it, into the kitchen. The doors into the bedroom and kitchen are curtained with faded half-cotton, half-silk portières. On the inside of the door, which gives into the hall, a mezuze, the Jewish luck-piece.

TIME

About two-thirty of a hot Saturday afternoon in July. As the curtain rises, the father, mother, and lame daughter MASHA *are disclosed. Owing to the fact that Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath, no work is being done, though the Saturday afternoon gayety and activity of the city is plainly in the air.* AARON BERCHANSKY *is sitting at the table reading. The lame girl is also reading, between the table and the window.* MRS. BERCHANSKY, *who has been in the kitchen, is seen entering. She is wear-*

ing a worn black silk shawl, and is obviously prepared to go somewhere. She is of that order of poor Jewess who has suffered much, whose face is sad and careworn, and who, at her time of life, goes uncorseted.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Speaking with the Yiddish accent and in the vernacular of her class.*]

You hear me! Are you ready to come? Oi, it's hot!

MASHA

[*A dark, pale, thin-faced girl, with delicate, bloodless hands. She pauses from her reading and looks up.*]

Oh, yes; come. Let's go to the park. The sun on this tin roof is terrible. It makes me sick. No wonder the Hirshes moved out. [*She looks across the court to the empty apartment.*] They couldn't stand that top floor.

BERCHANSKY

[*Looking up and over also, and closing his book. He is a kind-faced, slightly stooped and grizzled man of fifty-five, with sunken bloodless*

cheeks, a very spare frame, and deep-set, heavily eye-browed eyes. His partially bald head is surmounted by the customary Jewish black cotton skull-cap. Tufts of hair protrude from over his ears. He has a weary, indefinite and yet meditative air.]

So! Dey vent! Yes, but, Masha, my dear, it takes money to move. I vould never live under a tin roof if I could afford somet'ing better. [*Rises and walks over to her and takes her hand and pats it.*] Come, now. You read later. Mamma, leben, ve vill go, den. Yes. [*Returning to the table.*] But dis book—it interests me. Here is a writer—oi! but he knows! If t'ings should be so as he makes dem, den ve vould not live under tin roofs in hot vedder—de rich so rich, de poor so poor. Ach! [*Picks up the book.*] Masha, my dear, come here. Look. Oi, it's fine leather! In a second-hand store I got it. Twenty-five cents! [*With a movement of his hands.*] But I should care! Now, it vould be vorth five dollars. Ach, I take it along. Under de trees I can read.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Bringing the lame girl her hat and cane.*]

Stop talking books. Vot you read, it don't help. Ve verk just de same. [*Aside, nudging her daughter.*] Tell him he should hurry.

MASHA

[*Cheerfully, taking her hat and cane.*]

We're ready, papa. [*Steps are heard on the stair; the door opens.*]

That's Rae, I guess.

BERCHANSKY

[*With a desire to be cheerful.*]

So, you're home, den.

RAE

[*Entering.*]

Hello, everybody! Gee, it's hot! I'm all in. I've done seven heads this mornin' without a break, not a minute between. Maybe ya think that ain't work. Say! Wotcha doin', everybody? Where ya goin'?

[*Takes off her hat and coat, and begins to undo her waist. She is of that vulgar-smart class of young Jewess that affects the latest and most gaudy of everything. Her hat is of varnished black straw with a white band, giving her face a mannish look. Her suit of linen is of a black-and-white check. White silk stockings, high-heeled slippers, a plain lawn shirt-waist decorated with a large pink cameo, complete her costume. As she loosens her waist she starts to walk to the bedroom.*]

MASHA

[*Limping to the window and looking out.*]
To the park. Do you want to come?

RAE

[*From the bedroom.*]
Park? Quitcha kiddin'. Think that's all I gotta do—sit on a bench in a park? Good night! I've got something better'n that. [*By this time she has partially disrobed, and returns in skirt and kimono.* BERCHANSKY, *by a motion of the hands and a lift of the eyebrows, has signified plainly that he does not approve of this modern looseness of tongue and manner.*] Say, whaddya think I heard t'day? Who d'ya think saw Isadore, an' where? At a prize fight! Two weeks ago. An' whaddya think he was doin'? Carryin' a bucket an' a sponge to rub off one o' the men! A prize fight rubber! An' him only out o' the penitentiary three months, an' on probation!

[*At the mention of this, a visible pain passes over the faces of the others.* MRS. BERCHANSKY *looks at her husband. He stiffens and looks into space, avoiding their glances.* MASHA *looks from mother to father, helplessly and in pity.*]

BERCHANSKY

Rae! Dat you should say such t'ings!

RAE

[*Hurriedly, and without appearing to notice the effect, the while taking the pins out of her hair.*]

Well, it's so, ain't it? A swell job, eh? Abe Gruber had a box seat an' saw him. Gee, I thought I'd drop when he told me! I thought my ears 'ud fry an' fall off! First it's two years in the penitentiary for assaultin' a little girl, an' now he's gotta come an' hang around here an' sponge at prize fights! A swell chance we've got, tryin' to do anything or be anybody. We'll never get away from that. Why don't he get out o' New York if he can't do any better than that?

BERCHANSKY

Rae! I forbid you! Your own brother!

MASHA

[*Appealingly.*]

You know he isn't quite right. Why do you talk so? Why don't you give him a chance? Think of his spells.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Ach, Rae! [*Putting her hands to her face and sighing.*] Ach, mein Gott! Mein Gott! Trouble, trouble, trouble!

RAE

[*Defiantly.*]

A chance! Fine use he's made of his chances! What use could he make of it if he had it? [*She stares.*] Why don't you put him away before he does any more damage? You say he ain't right; sure, he ain't. Then what's he doin' outside Bloomingdale?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Lifting her hands.*]

Bloomingdale!

BERCHANSKY

[*Horrified at the mention of an asylum.*]

An asylum! Ach, dat's horrible!

RAE

Oh, well! Have it your way. You'll probably find out when it's too late. [*She walks off into the bedroom, shrugging her shoulders.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Coming over to her husband and patting him on the shoulder.*]

Ach, Aaron. Let's go. It vill be nicer in de park.

MASHA

Yes, let's. [*She picks up her book, which she has put down, and the three prepare to leave. As they approach the door to open it, other footsteps are heard. Pleasantly.*] It's Joe.

[*Enter* JOSEPH, *a clean, spruce, brisk-looking boy of seventeen. He is neatly, but somewhat extremely, dressed in a light tan suit and straw hat, and has an air of gayety and playfulness about him. As he enters, he takes off his coat.*]

JOE

[*Looking lightly from one to the other.*]

Cold, ain't it? What's the row? [*He goes toward the bedroom.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Wearily and gloomily.*]

Plenty! Plenty! It is vith love for one anudder dat I vould hev my children grow up, but instead, vot do I hear? Nutting but quarreling an' hard

t'ings! Oi! Oi! Such a business! Such a business! [*He shakes his head.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Sadly.*]
Alvays dis fighting, dis fighting!

RAE

[*Coming to the bedroom door.*]
Who's fightin'? Who said anything? I'm sure I didn't.

JOE

What's the row? What's the trouble?

MASHA

[*Soothingly.*]
Oh, nothing. It's about Isadore, but let's not talk any more. We were just going out in the park.

JOE

Well, what about him? Where is he?

MASHA

Oh, some one saw him at a prize fight, and told Rae.

JOE

What fight? Well, what of it? What's he doin'? Has he got a job? [*He walks into the bathroom, takes off his tie, and returns.*]

MASHA

Oh, we don't know. Rae's mad because he was helping sponge one of the men.

JOE

[*Interestedly.*]

H'm! With his game arm? What fight was it—the Neil-Kerens bout?

MASHA

[*Sadly.*]

Oh, I don't know. One of Rae's friends saw him.

RAE

[*Appearing at the bedroom door.*]

Yes, an' you know as well as I do he oughtn't to be there. He oughtn't to be out at all. He ain't right, an' you know it. [*Returns.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Excitedly.*]

Are ve goin' to begin again? Are ve goin' to begin again?

JOE

Well, what's so bad about that? I don't see. He hasn't done anything very wrong, has he? Plenty of fellows help at prize fights. [RAE *clicks her tongue disdainfully.*] He hasn't been around here, has he?

MASHA

No. Rae wants us to put him away.

JOE

Where?

MASHA

Bloomingdale.

JOE

[*Thoughtfully.*]

Oh, I don't know. He ain't so bad. There are plenty of fellows worse'n him walkin' around. [*Pauses.*] Of course, with that arm—[*pauses again.*] If he'd only get a job an' stick to it, he'd be all right. [*He disappears into the bathroom again.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Heavily.*]

Ach, my poor boy! My poor boy! Vot vill become of him? Vot vill be de end?

[*She,* BERCHANSKY, *and* MASHA *move toward the door, when other steps are heard, and* ISA-

DORE *enters. He is a tall, lithe, broad-shouldered young man of twenty or twenty-one, so strangely composed mentally and physically that he is bizarre. He is so badly compounded chemically that he seems never to be of one mood, and has a restless, jerky, fidgety gait and manner. From moment to moment his facial expression changes. Also, he has an affliction of the left arm and shoulder, which causes it to twitch or jerk involuntarily. He has an odd, receding forehead, black hair, large brown eyes, and a pale yet healthy skin. A huge seal ring of a cheap quality is on one finger, a glass garnet of great size in his tie, which is of a flaring yellow. His hat is a small, round, saw-edge straw, with a bright striped band. His collar is very high, of the turn-down order, and slightly soiled. His shoes are yellow and patched, his socks white. Under his arm are a number of newspapers rolled up.*]

ISADORE

[*Mock cheerfully. Surveying the family with an air of general well being.*]

Well, here I am.

[*At the sight of him* MR. *and* MRS. BERCHANSKY *and* MASHA *fall back.* BERCHANSKY *opens his mouth slightly,* MRS. BERCHANSKY *squeezes her daughter's arm,* MASHA *stiffens and stands up very straight.*]

BERCHANSKY

MRS. BERCHANSKY

MASHA

Isadore!

RAE

[*Looking out of the bedroom.*]

Well, of all things! So you're back, are you?

MASHA

[*Gently and calmly.*]

We're glad you've come, Isadore. [MRS. BERCHANSKY *crosses over to where he is.*] How are you?

ISADORE

[*With a slight touch of irritation at their surprise.*]

Oh, I'm all right. What's the matter with you all? Whaddy ya all want to stare at me for?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Pleadingly.*]

Isadore! Ve're not staring. Ve're glad. [*She smooths his hand.*]

MASHA

You know we're always glad to see you, Isadore. Why shouldn't we be?

JOE

[*Appearing at the bathroom door.*]
Hello, Is! Where do you come from?

ISADORE

Well, where do you think? New York, of course. But I'm not goin' to use that name Isadore any more. It's a kike name. People laugh at it. I'm Irving from now on. You get me?

JOE

[*Lightly.*]
Oh, all right. You can't get me mad. [*He smiles.*]

BERCHANSKY

For vy you change your name? Ain't Isadore good enough?

ISADORE

Didn't I just tell you? It's a joke. Whoever picked that out must 'a' wanted to hoodoo me.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Tenderly.*]

Isadore, vy should you say dat?

ISADORE

[*Softening and turning to her.*]

That's all right, mom. I don't mean nothin'. You know me. [*Smooths her arm.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Solicitously, to* MASHA *and* BERCHANSKY.]

You go, an' I'll stay here an' talk to Isadore. [*She takes his hand.*]

ISADORE

[*Loftily.*]

No, you all go. I don't need anybody here while I work. I want to answer these ads. [*He goes to the table, takes off his coat, and unfolds the papers.*] I'll be all right. You don't mind me stayin' here, do you? I'll come an' meet you later. Where'll you be? [*His shoulder jerks.*]

JOE

[*Coming out of the bathroom and passing into the bedroom, accidentally kicking over a box in the bedroom, en route.*]

What's this box doin' in here?

RAE

[*Coming out to make room for him.*]
It's mamma's rags. I'll put 'em away after a bit.

BERCHANSKY

[*Coming over to* ISADORE, *who has sat down at the table and is spreading out his newspapers—nervously, and with a rising inflection.*]
You lost your last place? Den dey found out?

ISADORE

Sure, they did. A detective snitched on me. But I'll fix 'em this time. I'm goin' to get out o' New York soon. I'm goin' to get a job an' earn a little money an' then I'm goin' to go.

BERCHANSKY

[*Shaking his head and wringing his hands.*]
More trouble. Oi! Oi!

ISADORE

[*Lightly and with a careless bravado and half-charm, the while his shoulder jerks occasionally.*]
Don't worry any more about me, pop. I'm all right. Can't you see? [*Takes hold of his hand in an*

affectionate way. MRS. BERCHANSKY *comes over and stands by him.*] I'm goin' to get a good job soon, mom. You know me. I like to work. I just got some newspapers, an' I'm goin' to answer the ads. [*To* MASHA.] You haven't got any paper an' envelopes, have you?

MASHA

[*Going to a drawer in the machine.*]
How many do you want? Will six do?

ISADORE

[*Judicially.*]
Better give me a dozen. [*He turns to his father.* MASHA *brings them over and puts them down. His shoulder jerks, and* MRS. BERCHANSKY, *who is behind him and out of his view, shakes her head sadly.*] How's the needle an' thread business, pop? Not much in it, eh? An' hard work, too. Well, never mind; I'll get a job now, an' everything's goin' to be all right. I'm not goin' to hang around here any more. [*He scratches his ear meditatively. Seeing* RAE, *who has come out of the bathroom, looking at him.*] You needn't be afraid of me, Rae. I'm not goin' to stay in New York much longer to disgrace you. I wanted to see the folks an' get these ads answered. That's why I'm here. Gee, it's hot out. Terrible. Where were you folks goin'?

MASHA

Out to the park.

JOE

[*Bustling out fully dressed.*]

Well, so long, everybody. I've gotta go. [*He goes out.*]

MASHA

[*Nudging her father.*]

You better come with us and leave him alone for a while. Don't ask him too many questions now.

BERCHANSKY

[*Heavily.*]

Yes. Yes. Vell, you'll come, den? Ve'll be near de statue out here under de trees.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

You'll come, Isadore, yes? Ve'll vait for you. Everyt'ing vill be all right. You'll stay for dinner, yes?

ISADORE

Well, maybe. [*He nods condescendingly. They all go—all but* RAE. *As they disappear, he turns to his papers. To himself.*] But how am I goin' to do it—that's what I'd like to know? What kind o' references can *I* give? Say, every time a detective sees me now he wants to know what I'm doin'. [*The clock*

strikes three.] An' I can't seem to keep one when I get it. [*His shoulder jerks.*] An' I've gotta report to that probation officer every month like a schoolboy. Say! [*He pauses and stares at the paper.*] But it ain't that. It ain't that. It's their faces an' their nice make-ups an' the way they do their hair. That's what's the matter with me. It's their stockin's an' their open shirtwaists an' their shoulders an' arms. I can't stand it no more. I can't seem to think of nothin' else. It's the way they walk an' talk an' laugh—their teeth always showin', an' their red lips. It's gettin' worse all the time.

[*He gets up, stiffens. A strange, fierce, animal light comes into his eyes. He breathes heavily and clenches his hands.*]

RAE

[*Entering from the bedroom and noting him standing. She is powdered and painted—a picture of gauche tenement-house finery. She is trifling with an imitation gold chain purse.*]

Wotcha doin'?

ISADORE

[*Startled, and sinking back into his chair and his normal mood.*]

Answerin' some ads. Didn't I tell you? Whaddy ya think I'm doin'? Whaddy ya wanta look at me

that way for? [*Surveys her, and as he does so his mood changes. He softens and becomes objectionably mushy.*] Gee, but you look good, kid. [*Beckons.*] Come over here. Give us a kiss, will you?

RAE

[*Savagely.*]

Say, what the devil's the matter with you, anyhow? Cut the comedy! Whaddy ya think I am? Another ten-year-old? [*She sniffs and switches toward the door.*]

ISADORE

[*Jumping after her and reaching the door first. He seizes her by the arm, the while his face becomes livid and his shoulder jerks.*]

What's the matter with you, anyhow, Rae? Whaddy ya think I am? Whaddy ya wanta throw up my past to me for? You ain't like a sister to me, anyhow. You never was.

[*He attempts to pull her to him. She strikes him in the face.*]

RAE

Let go! What's the matter with you, anyhow? Whaddy ya think I am? Don't try to pull that stuff on me. You nut! [*She pushes him back.*] Want me to call the police or the neighbors? A

fine brother you are! [*She pulls loose and opens the door.*] You *must* be crazy—your own sister! [*She steps into the hall.*] I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself. Wait'll the family hears o' this!

ISADORE

[*Weakening as she mentions the police and the family.*]

Gee, I must be crazy. I don't seem to be able to stand anything no more. You look so nice,—that's the trouble. Don't say anything to the folks, will you, Rae? I ain't quite right, I guess. Ain't I suffered enough? Don't you know what I'm up against, havin' the feelin's I do? I ain't so bad. I just can't stand things, that's all. [*His shoulder jerks; his face contorts.*] It's just their pretty faces, an' their mouths, an' their shoulders, an' the way they fix their hair. [*He becomes incoherent. Steps are heard outside. He turns, relaxes his expression, and straightens up.*]

[*Enter* MRS. GREENBAUM, *with her six-year-old daughter. She is tall, statuesque, neatly dressed. From the quality of her apparel it is very plain that she is in considerably better circumstances than her parents. A tan silk foulard dress, white hat, and black-and-white striped parasol are the chief outstand-*

ing features of her garb. Her daughter is neatly dressed in a starched, stiff white dress and a green straw hat.]

TILLIE

[*Running forward.*]
Hello, Aunty Rae! [*Kisses her.*]

RAE

Hello, Tillie! How are you?

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Observing only* RAE *at first, and her expression.*]
Hello, Rae! What's the matter? [*Seeing* ISADORE, *and being plainly astonished.*] Why, hello, Isadore! Home again? Where'd you come from?

ISADORE

Oh, around town. Where'd you think I come from? But my name's not Isadore any more from now on. It's Irving. I'm changin' it. I'm tired of that kike name. Don't forget that, will you?

RAE

[*Looking up semi-sarcastically at her sister and smiling, as if to say: "Something new."*

She twitches her head indicatively in ISADORE'S *direction. Sotto voce.*]

Look out for him. He's off to-day. Crazy about girls again. [*Aloud.*] But I've gotta go right away. The folks are all out in the park near the gate. [*Lowering her voice.*] Don't stay here long alone, will you? Get him to go out in the park, if you can. So long! [*Goes out.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Placatively, but unafraid, crossing to the bedroom and looking in.*]

So you're changing your name, are you?

ISADORE

[*Pleasantly.*]

Sure. I can't land a job with this one. It's a kike name, anyhow. Whaddy they wanta give me that kike name for, huh? [*His shoulder jerks. He returns to the table and takes up his papers.* TILLIE *runs to him and grabs him by the knees. He looks down at her, picks her up and kisses her.*] You're a pretty kid, eh?

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Walking into the bedroom and stumbling over the box.*]

Goodness! What's this?

ISADORE

[*Looking around.*]

Mom's rags, I guess. She always keeps 'em there.

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Coming out.*]

Where'd all the folks go, anyhow?

ISADORE

[*Pinching Tillie's cheek.*]

They're all out in the park. Mom an' pop an' Masha. Out near the gate, they said. [*He fingers* TILLIE's *hair.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Going to the rear window and looking out.*]

The Hirshes have moved, haven't they? [ISADORE *turns and looks through the windows.*] My, but it's hot up here! I don't wonder they went. I wonder papa and mamma don't move. They could get some other place than this, just as cheap. It's dreadful! What are you doing?

ISADORE

Oh, I'm answerin' some ads for a job.

MRS. GREENBAUM

I thought you just had one.

ISADORE

I did, but I lost it. These damned detectives keep followin' me around. Gee, but I don't seem to be able to keep anything no more. [*He scratches his head. His shoulder jerks. He ignores* TILLIE *for the moment.*] Everybody seems to know me.

[*His shoulder jerks, and he looks up, unhappy.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Coming over, leaning down and patting his shoulder, the while she experiences a wave of sympathy.*]

Now listen, Isadore [*he looks up*]—Irving, I mean—you're not so badly off. Your life's all before you, really. You've still time to make good. Brace up. You should do it for mamma's and papa's sakes. You've had a hard time but you can get something. You know how they worry. People aren't going to always remember. They forget soon enough when you make good. You know how they forget. Look at Harold Greenberg. See what he did! And now he's made good no one questions about his past. We're all willing to forget. Why keep reminding us? George is always willing to help you. He can give you a job, if you want it. Why don't you ask him?

ISADORE

[*Irritably.*]

Yes, he would! Like hell! Didn't I ask him three months ago? An' did he give me anything? He did not! [*His shoulder jerks.*] I've been walkin' around tryin' to get sompin steady ever since. I know the folks don't want me here, an' I can't blame 'em, either. It's all my fault, of course, but— [*His shoulder jerks and his face contorts.* MRS. GREENBAUM, *who is only partially interested, makes a gesture as much as to say, "Oh, what's the use?" and walks toward the bookcase.* ISADORE *surveys* TILLIE, *playing with her hair and turning her face so as to look into her eyes. Finally he observes:*] How old are you now, kid?

TILLIE

Six. I'll be seven next June. Then I'll be goin' to college.

ISADORE

[*Gayly.*]

You don't say! Quick work, eh? Some scholar! [*He turns up her chin. His shoulder jerks.*]

TILLIE

Yes, an' I got a box of paints, an' cards that I can sew on, an' a sewing machine, an' now I'm goin'

to get roller skates. An' next summer I'm goin' to learn to swim.

[*He continues to stare at her, the while* MRS. GREENBAUM *picks up a magazine and examines it, and the child babbles on. That same look of uncontrolled and unnatural sex-interest begins to show in his eyes. He pushes the child out at arm's length and begins to stare fixedly. His shoulder jerks.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Turning and observing the look. She starts and frowns, then comes over, takes the child by the hand and helps her down.*]

Come, now. Say good-by to Uncle Irving. We're going down into the park to see grandma. You'll be here for dinner, won't you?

ISADORE

[*Recovering, and rising.*]

Sure. Sure. You're goin', are you? See you later, eh? [*He follows them to the door as they go out. After they have gone he returns to the table, apparently quite unconscious of what has just happened, and sits down. Continuing, as he takes up a newspaper, his shoulder jerking.*] Gee! At last! I gotta do this now. [*He stretches his arms, and reads:*]

"WANTED, ACTOR, experienced stock man, to assist producing, on part or full time; write particulars and lowest figure considering permanent city engagement. CARO, 92 Steuben St., Brooklyn."

[*Aside.*] Well, I ain't an actor. I wish I was. But half the time they're out of a job, too. [*Meditates.*] I might act, though. Gee, that's the life! All them pretty girls! I might answer that. [*Marks it. Begins to read again.*] "Automobile mechanic, automobile mechanic, automobile mechanic, automobile mechanic" [*aside*]—say, look at all the automobile mechanics! Well, I ain't an automobile mechanic. I wish I was. I'd get a job now, maybe, out o' one o' these. [*Meditates.*] But this bum arm o' mine—that's the trouble. I can't really do nothin' steady with that. People don't like it. [*His shoulder jerks. Reads.*] "Boy, boy, boy, boy"—look at all the boys, will yuh? There's a whole procession of 'em. [*Smiles.*] "Chauffeur, chauffeur, chauffeur, chauffeur." That's a good job, too, ridin' around in a good car. I wish I'd get a chance to learn that. I could pick up a nice girl if I had a car like that. [*Meditates.*] But where'd I find out how to run one, with this arm o'

mine? [*It jerks. He reads.*] "Collector, collector, collector"——

"COLLECTOR, Young man; reference. 11 Murray Street, 7th floor."

I wonder how much money they make. I oughta be able to do a thing like that, if I could behave myself and give any references. Greenbaum oughta help me to get that. [*He marks it. Silence. The clock ticks. He begins to hum a portion of a popular song. Reads. A knock is heard at the door—very soft.*]

ISADORE

[*Pausing in his work and soliloquizing.*]

But look at me, anyhow! I ain't no good, much. I don't amount to nothin'. Here I am of a Saturday afternoon when everybody else is off sportin' around, an' I ain't got no place to go, an' no work, an' no money. [*He looks at his patched shoes, feels one, then feels in his pockets and produces a few cents.*] An' look at my shoes! I'm a bum, that's what I am. I ain't no good, an' I never will be. I ain't had a job in two months—not a good one. An' nobody cares for me now no more, nobody but mom an' pop an' Masha, really. They got their own lives, an' they go on an' do things, an' they don't count me in on 'em, not one of 'em. They

can't, really. [*He stares at the floor. His shoulder jerks. The clock ticks. The slight tap at the door is renewed but he pays no heed.*] Mom an' pop! [*He shakes his head.*] But they ain't got anything, either. They're as bad off as I am. Poor mom. I'm sorry for her. She tries so hard—all the work she's had. [*His shoulder jerks.*] An' pop—he's all right, too, only he's almost as bad off as I am, peddlin' needles an' thread. Think o' that. [*He meditates.*] An' Masha, with her game leg! An' me! I'm not right. I know that. I ought never 'a' been brought in the world. They ought never to 'a' had so many children. Not me, anyhow. [*He gets up.*] I know I'll do sompin wrong pretty soon. I feel it. I can't help it. I ought to kill myself, but I ain't got the nerve, that's what's the matter! [*He half sobs.*] I'd be better off. Think of ten children, an' one crazy, an' one lame, an' four dead. Well, *they're* better off, anyhow. [*The knock sounds again, lightly. He does not hear.*] I had a good job with that dentist, if I'd only 'a' done right, but I couldn't help myself. I just couldn't. I ain't right, that's what's the matter with me. [*Meditates.*] Gee! It's a wonder I didn't kill her, feelin' the way I did. I suppose I would, too, if they hadn't caught me. An' the way she screamed! An' the way they beat me up! Gee! An' that Island! I

don't want to go back there no more. [*He turns and walks about, his hands in his pockets, his eyes staring.*]

[*As he does so the door opens, and* KITTY NEAFIE *puts her head in. She is a plump, blonde, almost red-headed child of eleven, with blue eyes and a pink skin. She has on a light brown linen dress and straw hat, with brown slippers and stockings.*]

KITTY NEAFIE

[*Timidly, because of the absence of the accustomed faces.*]

Nobody home? Didn't Tillie come over to-day?

ISADORE

[*Aroused by the fact that the child is pretty and alone. His expression changes instantly, and he becomes soft and ingratiating.*]

Hello! Who are you? [*She pauses uncertainly.*] Come on in, kid. They'll be back in a minute. I'm just Uncle Irving, that's all. You don't know me, but I belong here. Wanta see sompin?

[*He looks around to find something to show her. Observes a pair of opera glasses on the top of the bookcase and takes them down. The child, smiling and interested by his manner, comes in.*]

KITTY NEAFIE

[*Diffidently.*]

I can't stay very long. I thought sure I'd find Tillie here. Ain't you Uncle Isadore?

ISADORE

Yes, that's what they used to call me, Isadore—that was my name, but I'm changin' it to Irving. I like that better—don't you? [KITTY *nods her head.*] What's yours?

KITTY NEAFIE

My name's Kitty Neafie. I live just downstairs here, below you, on that side. [*She points.*]

ISADORE

Well, that's a nice name, too. But who told you about me? [*His shoulder jerks.*]

KITTY

Oh, Masha. She said I hadn't seen you yet, but that you might come some day. Haven't you ever been here before? [*She takes the glasses held out to her, and examines them. Tries to see through them.*]

ISADORE

Yes, I been here once before, since we moved. Ain't they nice? [*He smiles on her winningly.*]

KITTY NEAFIE

Yes, but I can't see anything!

ISADORE

[*Taking the glasses and adjusting them.*] Let me show you. [*His shoulder jerks.*] See here. Now look. See how far away everything looks.

KITTY

[*Eagerly.*]

Oh, lemme see! Ain't it funny! Oh, how funny everything looks! [*She looks out of the window.*]

ISADORE

[*Surveying her avidly, but with caution.*]

Now wait. Let me show you. Through this end everything looks near. [*He adjusts them and gives them to her again.*] Now look.

[*She takes them, puts them to her eyes and then begins slowly to move toward the wall, looking through them at the table.*]

KITTY

Oh, how funny! Ain't it nice? I can see the table! An' your papers, an' the inkstand! [*Walks forward again curiously and bumps into him.*] Oh! [*Laughs.*]

ISADORE

[*Excitedly, with trembling hands.*]

Now turn 'em the other way again. [*she does so.*] See how different it is.

[*His shoulder jerks. As she looks, he stands and stares at her in a greedy, savage, half-insane way, his face coloring.*]

KITTY

Oh, it's so different, ain't it? Everything looks so funny! [*She laughs.*]

ISADORE

[*Walking to other side of table.*]

Yes, but now look at me over here. Now watch me as I move.

[*He returns, slowly, coming up close to her. She puts out her hand and touches him. As she does so, his expression flares to one of fierce, demoniac hunger. He snatches the glasses away, puts them behind his back, and laughs a playful, semi-idiotic laugh.*]

KITTY

[*Half-scared, half-laughing. Her expression changes as she looks.*]

Why—why—you look so funny—I—[*She laughs hysterically, but with dread in her voice.*]

ISADORE

[*Half-wild and half-intelligent.*]

Oh, I was just foolin'. Can't you see? I just wanted to see if I could scare you.

KITTY

Why—why—was you? I thought—[*the clock ticks loudly*]—I better go home now. I guess—I think—my—mother—wants—me—[*She begins to back away.*]

ISADORE

[*Approaching and staring at her.*]

Oh, no, she don't. You don't want to go yet. Don't be afraid. Didn't you just come from home?

[*He tries to look sweet, and instead achieves weirdness. His face is slightly contorted, his smile ridiculous.*]

KITTY

[*Breathlessly.*]

No, I just went to church this afternoon to confession. I was just goin' home now. I thought I'd stop in an' see Tillie if she was here—but—I—[*Pauses.*]

ISADORE

But you're a good little girl, ain't you? You ain't got nothin' to confess.

KITTY

No, no—but I have to go now. I know my mother wants me. [*She moves again.*] If Tillie comes, tell her I'll come up after awhile. [*She backs away and reaches the door, still staring.*]

ISADORE

[*Following, his shoulder jerking. He has a hungry, seeking look.*]

Oh, no, don't go. Stay. Why don't you stay? She'll be back in a minute. I've got lots of nice things to show you. [*He looks about the room seeking something, then takes her arm.*]

KITTY

[*Fearfully.*]

No—no—I mustn't. I have to go. Really, I must. I gotta go now. Please, I do. My mother wants me. I know she does. [*She begins to pull and whimper, reaching for the door.*]

ISADORE

[*Seizing her and lifting her up in his arms.*]

No! No! You don't wanta go! You wanta stay, don't you? [*She begins to scream. He puts his hand over her mouth and half smothers her cries.*] Stay with me! Stay with me!

[*He lifts and carries her, struggling, into the bedroom, from which for a few seconds emerge sounds of contest, half smothered cries, words of appeal or command. Silence ensues, save for the ticking of the clock. After a time* ISADORE *emerges, the child limp in his arms. One slipper has fallen off. He is hot, disheveled, plainly insane, and yet with a shrewd, canny, cautious look in his eyes. Between his hand and the child's mouth is a handkerchief. He looks about as if uncertain what to do, comes over to the door, cautiously locks it, and returns to center of the room. He then goes to the bedroom again, comes out, the child still in his arms, and goes to the window and stares across at the vacant apartment. Standing so, he seems to be struck with an idea, returns to the bedroom, puts the child down, comes out again, opens the door, listens, then looks up the stairway. He then goes out and disappears. In a few moments he returns in the same way, enters the bedroom, returns with the child in his arms, and disappears through the door.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

Scene 1

Same as Act I. When the curtain goes up, the stage is empty. It is now about six-thirty, and the sense of a hot summer evening is suggested by the light. A few pieces of colored cloth—green, blue, red—are lying about the floor between the table and the bedroom door, at the foot of the machine. On the table are Isadore's papers, undisturbed. A sound of steps is heard on the stair. Enter in this order: Mrs. Berchansky, Mrs. Greenbaum, Tillie, Masha, *and* Berchansky.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Looking around and seeing the pieces of cloth, and beginning to pick them up.*]

Isadore! [*Pauses.*] Isadore! [*She looks into the bedroom and kitchen.*] Gone again! It's too bed! Vell, now maybe ve von't see him again. I t'ought he vould stay. [*Looks into the bedroom again.*] Vot's diss! Somebody's been at my rags! Such upset! Such upset! Vere's de box? [*She re-enters the room, stooping and picking.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Walking about in a stately way.*]

Tck! Tck! Tck!—but it's hot! Isadore's gone, has he? I thought maybe he wouldn't stay. I'll open the window in the bathroom here. Perhaps we can get a breeze. [*She goes into the bathroom and returns.*]

BERCHANSKY

Yes, it is hot, but *I* tell you how to keep cool [*gesticulating with his finger*]—a little hot tea. Dat's it! Ice cream! Ice cream soda! Who drinks dat? Poison, I tell you, poison—cornstarch. Young people, dey must alvays be in de kendy-store, nowadays, spendin' dere five-cent pieces. If dey put dere five cents in dere pockets an' hot tea in dere stomachs, believe me, it's better.

[*He illustrates their disposition with his hands, puts down his book, goes into the bathroom and lights the gas.*]

MASHA

Oh, papa, that's an old-fashioned idea. Everybody likes ice-cream soda.

TILLIE

[*Patting her stomach.*]

Umm—m—wish I had some.

MASHA

[*To Tillie, genially.*]

Supper'll be ready soon. [*Bends over and whispers in her ear.*] Then if you're good, I'll give you five cents, and you can go down and have an ice-cream soda after supper. Ssh!

[*Pats her cheek and points her finger, as much as to say, "Don't tell the others!" She then goes into the kitchen and begins to bring out things for the table. As she starts about her work,* MRS. GREENBAUM *clears* ISADORE'S *papers off the table, including the paper and envelopes which* MASHA *had brought him. These last she holds in her hands for a moment, then places them on top of the newspapers on a chair.* TILLIE *comes toward them.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

Now, Tillie, let them alone!

MASHA

[*Returning from kitchen.*]

This place looks upset. Where's the oilcloth from the kitchen table, mamma?—Mamma!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*From the bedroom.*]

Yes?

MASHA

[*With a puzzled look on her face.*]

Come here. [MRS. BERCHANSKY *appears at the door. She has a child's slipper in her hand, at which she is looking in a disturbed and secretive way. Before* MASHA *speaks,* MRS. BERCHANSKY *indicates it with her right hand.* MASHA *sees, starts, pales slightly, then says in a low voice*:] The oilcloth on the kitchen table—do you know where it is?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Vere could it be? Dat's funny! An' dis! [*She holds out the slipper, which is concealed from the others by* MASHA's *body, then slips it under her shawl.*] It's not Tillie's. [*She looks at Tillie, who is standing near.*] Rae has no slippers like dis!

[*They come out together, looking at each other oddly.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Stepping out of the bathroom and listening a moment.*]

Vot's funny, Masha?

[MRS. BERCHANSKY *and* MASHA *exchange warning glances.*]

MASHA

Nothing . . . nothing. It's only a broken glass. Isadore didn't wait?

[*She and* MRS. BERCHANSKY *go into the kitchen.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Following them to the kitchen door.*]

Vot iss it?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Nervously, from the kitchen.*]

Nothing . . . nothing. A little dish broke.

[*He returns to the table.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Seating himself.*]

Now, I can eat. I'm hungry. It's efter seven. [*He lights the gas over the table.*]

TILLIE

[*Pulling up a chair.*]

Come on, everybody! [*Fixes herself at the table.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Rising from her chair where she has been examining one of* ISADORE'S *papers.*]

Aren't you going to wait for Isadore and Rae?

BERCHANSKY

For Isadore? For him you could vait a long time! He comes vunce to-day, den he is gone again. Last time it vuz a month. Rae, she comes an' goes ven

she pleases. Coney Island, Rockaway, Beach Long —I should know vere she is! [*He lifts his hands, then subsides and strikes his chest gently.*] But, Esther, it hurts me plenty. Here it hurts me. Vunce you're old, den dey don't listen no more. [*He sighs.*] Dey t'ink dey know everyt'ing. [*With a rising inflection.*] I should advise! Yes! Remember, Esther, my child, vit' you it vuz different. You vuz de first, an' ve hed time for you. But ven the ot'ers come an' dere vuz vork—fourteen, sixteen hours a day—den I had no time no more to vatch, to find out, vere dey vuz going, vot dey vuz doing. I hed plenty troubles, plenty troubles. [*He shakes his head and reaches for the radishes. Turns again.*] Dey try an' teach us. Dey say ve are old fashion'—vot dey call "not up to date." But, Esther, dere ain't no fashions for de heart. No! [*He shakes his head.*] Only feelings. [*Puts his hand to his heart.*] An' sometimes it gets so full of feelings dat dere ain't no more room, an' I t'ink it's going to break—better dat it should. But it don't! It only goes on hurting. Nu—vot can I say? [*He shakes his head.*] But, Esther, you know I don't care how much I verk. I'd verk twenty hours, maybe twenty-two, so long as I see everyt'ing goes nice, an' ve hev enough to eat, an' my children are happy an' do vell. Some of dem—vell, it vuz to be—[*he shakes his head again*].

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Consolingly.*]

Well, the girls are all right. They haven't done anything wrong. And the boys'll take care of themselves. I wouldn't worry about any of them.

BERCHANSKY

Yes. All except Isadore. I don't know about him. He vuz here to-day, an' now he's gone again! Vere? Ach! It's too bed!

[*He shakes his head.* MASHA *and* MRS. BERCHANSKY *come forward.* MRS. BERCHANSKY *goes to the machine drawer, opens it, and slips the shoe into it. They seat themselves at the table. Their faces are a study in wonder and distress. At the remark concerning* ISADORE *they exchange glances. Steps are heard on the stairs. A knock follows.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Come!

[*The door opens, and a rather attractive Irish woman of perhaps thirty-seven or eight puts her head in at the door. She has a thin, intelligent face, silvery gray hair, a neat, cleanly appearance.*]

MRS. NEAFIE

Good evenin'! Oh, you're just afther sittin' down to your supper? Mine's waitin' for John. I'm sorry to be interruptin' you, but you haven't seen anything of my Kitty, have you? She went out early this afternoon to go to the church to confession, and she hasn't come back yet. [*At the mention of* KITTY'S *name,* MASHA *and* MRS. BERCHANSKY *exchange glances.*] I'm that worried! I can't understand what's keepin' her. [*Her face shows anxiety.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Pausing, his knife and fork in the air, and looking at her.*]

Kitty——

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Solicitously and nervously, glancing at* MASHA.]

No, Mrs. Neafie. Ve hev been out in de park all efternoon. She vuzn't here up to de time ve left—vuz she? [*She looks at* MASHA *for confirmation, then at her guest.* MRS. NEAFIE *turns to go.*] Von't you sit down?

BERCHANSKY

[*Idly.*]

Maybe, now——

MASHA

[*Interrupting him.*]

Tea, papa? [*To* MRS. NEAFIE.] Perhaps she's just stopped somewhere to play.

MRS. NEAFIE

[*Not listening to the others.*]

No, Mrs. Berchansky. No, thank you. I'm expectin' John home any minute now, an' he'll be afther wantin' his supper. I was thinkin' maybe she had come up here. Good night! [*She goes out.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*To* MASHA.]

For vy you push my arm?

MASHA

[*Heavily.*]

Did I? I didn't mean to. I just wanted to give you your tea.

TILLIE

[*Who all this while has been eating industriously and unobserved.*]

I want some tea, too!

MRS. GREENBAUM

Hush! Don't ask. You'll get some.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Pleadingly, but in an intense way.*]

Esther, take some cheese. I vonder vere Kitty could hev gone to, now?

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Indifferently.*]

Oh, she'll come back. She's just out playing somewhere. Tillie, don't reach! How many times have I told you?

TILLIE

Well, then, please can I have some cheese?

MRS. GREENBAUM

And how many times have I told you not to ask? If you want anything, whisper to me. You've had enough already. You'll make yourself sick.

BERCHANSKY

[*By whom* TILLIE *sits, gently.*]

Never mind, Tillie. You is a good little girl. [*He helps her to some more cheese. To* MRS. GREENBAUM.] Let de child eat. She must grow. Vot, Tillie?

[*He chucks her under the chin.* TILLIE *looks up at him affectionately and smiles.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

That's the way you always spoil them, papa. You always did.

BERCHANSKY

Ach, dey're babies only vunce. Dat time comes no more.

[*He looks benignly at the child.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

But, papa, you know how it is with children. I have a hard time enough with her, as it is.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Wearily.*]

Ach, Esther, children is children.

MASHA

[*Leaning her head on the table and shaking it slightly.*]

It's terrible!

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Addressing* MASHA.]

What's the matter?

MASHA

[*Softly.*]

The heat. [*She shakes her head again.*]

BERCHANSKY

Ven it's hot, it's hot. Inside, outside. Vot's de difference?

[*The clock strikes eight.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

Goodness, it's eight. I'll have to go. [*She rises.*] George will be home soon. I promised him I'd be home by eight. Come, Tillie. You've had enough. You've had too much. You'll be sick to-morrow.

[*She goes to the corner and secures her parasol.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Patting* TILLIE *on the back and kissing her.*] Nu, dis little von't hurt, vill it? [*Helps* TILLIE *down.*] Nu!

[*Kisses her.* TILLIE *kisses her grandmother.*]

TILLIE

Good-by, grandma.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Patting her.*] So! Dat's a nice girl.

MASHA

[*As* TILLIE *approaches and puts up her mouth.*] Good-by! [*She rises, preparatory to going into*

the kitchen. TILLIE *runs to the door, then comes running back, and putting up her arms, pulls* MASHA'S *head down and whispers something in her ear.* MASHA *nods.*] Oh, yes.

[*She limps to the machine drawer and takes something out.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

Tillie! Now, Masha, I won't have that! [*To* TILLIE.] You just give that back. [*As the child pouts.*] No, no, no! Now, I'll get you some ice-cream soda myself. Masha, take that. I won't have her asking for pennies. [*The child gives up the coin.* MRS. GREENBAUM *approaches the door.*] Come on, now! [*Takes* TILLIE'S *hand.*] Will you all come over to-morrow? George's mother is coming.

MASHA

[*Contemplating her mother in a distressed way.*] Yes, we'll come.

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Going out.*]
Good-by!

TILLIE

Bye-bye!
[*Exit.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Rising and brushing off his waistcoat.*]

Vell, it's nice. Esther, she gets along so vell. She has a nice home, a nice husband. He didn't hev much ven dey got married, but dey verked an' saved. Now, Tillie she ken hev piano lessons, an' dey ken live in a nice place. It's good.

[*He goes over to the bookcase and begins to examine some half-smoked cigars he is keeping there in an old cigar box. He picks up one and another, examining them critically.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Softly.*]

Unberufen! Unberufen!

BERCHANSKY

[*Sniffing at one fairly long butt doubtfully.*]

Vell, dis vill smoke me till I go to bed. Maybe my oder two girls dey marry good, too. Ach, I vish I could play pinochle to-night! Pinochle I can play alvays, even vet it's hot.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Heavily.*]

Papa! [*She hesitates and says no more.*]

BERCHANSKY

Vell, vot is it? Vot is it?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Papa, you know it's funny. I don't say it's any-t'ing . . . he vouldn't do anyt'ing now. [*She pauses.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Coming to attention.*]

Who? Vot? Vot are you talking about?

MASHA

Oh, it may be nothing, mamma. She may not have been up here. It may not be her shoe. [*She places her fingers to her lips.*] Maybe he's just gone to mail his letters.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

But de box! De oil cloth! Who vould take dem? An' my rags all over de floor! [*She stares at* MASHA. But vy didn't I stay? [*She shakes her head.*] Vy didn't I stay?

BERCHANSKY

[*In a troubled voice.*]

Box? Oil clawt? Shoe? Vot box? Vot is it you talk? [*They do not reply at once.*] Box? Oil clawt? Shoe? Vot's dat?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

You know. De box vere I keep my rags. Dat big one in de bedroom. It's gone. [*She rises and goes to the machine drawer, takes out the shoe and returns with it.*] Ven I come in I found dis in dere. [*She indicates the bedroom.*] Now Kitty Neafie is not home. An' de oil cloth from de kitchen table is gone. [*She wrings her hands.*] An' here's de rags, but vere is de box?

BERCHANSKY

[*Getting up and taking the shoe and examining it, a strained, puzzled look on his face.*]

Nu! [*He beats the table with his fingers.*] It's not Tillie's? Nu?

MASHA

No, it doesn't belong to her, nor to Rae, either.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Uncertainly.*]

An' Kitty not home! She may hev been up here.

MASHA

[*Consolingly.*]

Oh, I wouldn't be so nervous, mamma. She may not have been here. Why worry so?

BERCHANSKY

[*Folding his hands and swaying to and fro slightly. His face is a study in fear, puzzle, wonder.*]

Nu? You t'ink—[*His face blanches.*]

MASHA

Oh!!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Leading the way to the kitchen door.*]

An' de oilcloth out here . . . it's gone!

BERCHANSKY

Oilclawt'! Ach, Gott, vot could anybody vant vit' oilclawt'? [*He pauses.*] De box—it's gone, is it?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Returning.*]

Yes. Here are de rags, but I can't find de box. [*They look into the bedroom.*]

BERCHANSKY

Nu—you think—[*He throws up his hands. They return to the center of the room.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi—I don't understend! I don't know. Maybe he did somet'ing?

BERCHANSKY

Yes, vot? Vot could he do vit' a box? [*Pauses.*] But vy vorry before ve know? It's maybe nutting. [*He looks distressed himself.*] Don't vorry so much. [*He begins to walk up and down the floor.*]

MASHA

[*By the chair on which* MRS. GREENBAUM *has laid Isadore's papers.*]

Yes. . . . And here are his envelopes. I guess he didn't write, after all. [*She looks at her mother.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Ach, weh-is-mer! Weh-is-mer! [*She wrings her hands.*] I vish I know vot it is!

BERCHANSKY

[*Pausing and staring at the floor.*]

Maybe's more trouble. Sometimes I don't know vot to t'ink. [*A noise is heard on the stairs. The door is thrown open.*]

[*Enter* ISADORE. *He stands in the entry way, surprised and irritated. His eyes are strained and restless, his hair dishevcled, his face scratched, the marks of dust on one arm. One trousers leg is partially covered with burrs, the othcr has a tear. He looks irri-*

table, somewhat savage. BERCHANSKY *hides the shoe behind him.*]

ISADORE

[*Sharply.*]

Oh, you're back, are you? [*He crosses and enters the kitchen.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Following and looking after him.*]

You vant supper, Isadore? [*She stands, awe-stricken.*]

ISADORE

[*Calling back.*]

Supper, no! I gotta go right away again, anyhow. [*He returns, stuffing something into his pocket.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Nervously, a quality of fear and insufficiency in his voice, approaching and standing before him.*]

Vot is dis hurry? Look at your face! Vere hev you been? Your suit—[*Leans down and picks a burr.*] Vot's dis?

ISADORE

Oh, nothing. I've been playin' ball. [*His shoulder jerks.*]

BERCHANSKY

Ball? You play ball ven it's dark? [*Touching his elbow.*] Look at your sleeve! [*Points to his left trouser leg.*] Here it's torn. Vot iss dis? [*He stares at* ISADORE'S *face.*]

ISADORE

[*Irritably.*]

Nothing. Nothing, I tell you. What should it be? Leave me alone. I've been in a fight. [*His shoulder jerks.*]

BERCHANSKY

A fight? On Shabbas! Mit who? First you're playin' ball, den it's a fight. Now vich is it?

ISADORE

Oh, don't bother! I tell you I was in a fight! I'm all right, though. I've gotta go. [*He starts.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Uncertainly, because of his lesser strength, but placing himself in* ISADORE'S *path.*]

Vy you run avay? Go, vash your face! Clean your suit! It's a shame! It's a shame!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Gently.*]

Take off your coat, Isadore. I fix it. Maybe you'll eat somet'ing?

ISADORE

[*Irritably.*]

No, no, no! Don't bother! I've gotta go, I tell you. [*Starts again. His shoulder jerks.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*With a slight show of anger.*]

No, no, no! I don't believe dis! You tell me first, vot is dis? [*He produces the shoe.*] Whose is dis? [ISADORE *stares at it.*] Vere did it come from?

ISADORE

[*Savagely and with a touch of wildness in his manner.*]

What, that? I don't know where it come from. What're you talkin' about? [*His shoulder jerks.*]

BERCHANSKY

An' de box? An' de oilclawt'? Vot iss it about dem? Vot did you do vit' dem? Did you take dem? Vot becomes of de oilclawt' here? [*He motions toward the kitchen.*]

ISADORE

[*Savagely.*]

What box? What oilcloth? I didn't see no box, nor no oilcloth! What are you people talkin' about

—what are you lookin' at me for? What do I know? What are you tryin' to find out? [*His shoulder jerks.*]

BERCHANSKY

Vell, it vuz on de kitchen table. Now it's gone. An' de box! An' dis! [*He holds up the slipper.*] Vot is it about dis? Vot I vant to know is, how did dis come here? Vuz Kitty Neafie up here to-day? Did you see her?

ISADORE

[*Nervously.*]

I tell you I don't know! She wasn't here when I was here. What do I know about any box or oilcloth? I haven't seen them, I tell you. [*He starts to go.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Nervously.*]

De box in de bedroom, Isadore. It's gone, too. You didn't take it, maybe? [*She looks at him appealingly.*]

ISADORE

Me? No, no, no! What do I want with a box? I tell you I don't know anything about it! I haven't seen no box nor no oilcloth. I don't know what you're talkin' about. [*He starts again.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Laying a hand on him.*]

Ach, I don't understend! I don't understend! Vait! I vant to know about dese t'ings. First it's ball, den it's a fight. Your coat torn, your face scratched! Here is a shoe! De oilclawt' is gone, an' de box. An' dese things [*pointing to the burrs*]—I don't know vot dey are. But I know, I feel, it's somet'ing else. You ken't tell me it ain't, Isadore. An' I shell know now, vot is it? Vot hev you done? Vere is Kitty Neafie? Vuz she here to-day? [*He becomes very intense.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Appealingly.*]

Isadore, if it's somet'ing, vy don't you tell? You know it's better. Ve are your parents. Maybe ve cen help you. [*She plucks at his sleeve.*]

ISADORE

[*Swinging about irritably.*]

Oh, you're all crazy! [*His shoulder jerks.*] I don't know what you're talkin' about! I don't know anything about Kitty Neafie! I gotta go!

[*Starts. As he does so, his father seizes him vigorously by the arm.*]

BERCHANSKY

No! Here you stay! You liar! You loafer! You good-for-nutting! You run de streets an' get in jail, an' den you come here an' you von't tell me vot you do! Now, you shell tell me! I vant to know! I vill know! [ISADORE'S *shoulder jerks.*] Vot hev you done? You shell tell me now before you leave dis house! [*He reaches a great height of fury.*]

ISADORE

[*Savagely, a little wildly.*]

Let go! I don't know what you're talkin' about! You're all crazy.

[*He jerks himself loose. A fierce angry light blazes in his eyes. He moves about the table trying to pull away from his father, who hangs on. In the struggle, his right hand, which is in his right pocket, is withdrawn, and with it a tangle of cord. His shoulder jerks.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Shouting.*]

An' dis! Vot's dis now! Ach, mein Gott! Vot for is it? [*He grabs the string.*]

ISADORE

[*Tearing it away and yet struggling with him.*]

Let go! Let go!

[*He throws his father about. The table is struck, the chairs upset.* BERCHANSKY *is thrown to his knees.* ISADORE'S *shoulder jerks.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Still shouting.*]

Isadore! You hear me! Ach, mein Gott! I'll know before you go from dis house. Know, I vill! You shell tell me! [*His coat is torn, his skull-cap falls off. He gets to his feet.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*To one side with* MASHA.]

Don't, papa! Don't! Oh, Isadore! Don't! Ach!

MASHA

[*Limping to and fro.*]

Oh, this is terrible! I can't stand it! [*Approaches her father and begins to cry.*] Let him alone, papa. Please let him alone! Don't, Isadore! For shame!

BERCHANSKY

[*Shouting to her out of the contest.*]

Go 'vay! Go 'vay! Dis time I know vot I do. Tell me, he must! He vill tell me before he goes from here. [*To* ISADORE.] Before you leave dis house,

you vill tell me. I am your fader. Dis time you *vill* obey me. You hear me?

ISADORE

[*Throwing him off and down. His shoulder jerks.*]

Let go!

[BERCHANSKY *falls to the floor.* ISADORE *dashes to the door, pulls it open and runs down the stairs, slamming it after him.* BERCHANSKY, *getting to his feet, seizes a chair, runs after him, and, aiming it, runs as far as the door, then stops and puts it down, opens the door and shouts.*]

BERCHANSKY

Isadore! [*A pause.*] Isadore! [*The sound of* ISADORE'S *clattering feet is heard on the stairs. The hall door below is heard to slam. As it does so,* BERCHANSKY *ceases to call, drops his hands, then his head, and repeats softly.*] Isadore!

[*There is a silence in which* MASHA *goes to the window and looks out. The clock is heard to tick.* MRS. BERCHANSKY, *nonplussed and frightened, crosses over to her husband and lays a hand on his arm.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Tck! Tck! Tck! Dis should heppen in our old days! Vot comes now?

[BERCHANSKY *strikes his hands and shakes his head, but says nothing. As he stands there, the curtain descends for a few moments. The theater remains dark.*]

CURTAIN

Scene 2

Same as Scene One. Two hours are supposed to elapse. As the curtain rises the clock is striking ten. Berchansky, Mrs. Berchansky, Masha, Joe, *and* Mr. and Mrs. Greenbaum *are disclosed, scattered about the room and around the table.* Joe *is leaning against a side of the bathroom door, one foot crossed over the other.* Masha, Mrs. Berchansky *and* Mrs. Greenbaum *are seated at the table.* Berchansky *is standing behind* Masha, *near the table, very pale and distressed.* George Greenbaum *is seated on the window sill He is a simple, unpretentious, American-looking business man—very neat and silent. The shoe is on the table.*

GREENBAUM

Well, you don't really know that he's done anything, yet. What's the use getting so worked up about it? The slipper may not belong to her, after all.

BERCHANSKY

[*Argumentatively, and with a considerable amount of emotion.*]

Yes, but who else should it belong to? It's not Tillie's, an' who else vuz here? No vun! Unless Kitty, maybe, or some vun else. He hes done somet'ing, dat much I know. An' de box an' de oilclawt', de scratches on his face, de string. Vy did he run avay? He didn't look right to me—he didn't act right. [*He rubs his chin.*]

GREENBAUM

Yes, that's all true enough, but we really don't know that Kitty was up here. She isn't home yet, but that doesn't prove that he saw her.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi! Oi! Oi!

MRS. GREENBAUM

Yes, and the way he looked at Tillie this afternoon frightened me. When Rae went out she said he wasn't acting right. If that little girl came in here —[*She pauses.*]

GREENBAUM

How not acting right? [*He shifts his position as though he has been talking for some time.*] What did she say?

MRS. GREENBAUM

Well, I didn't have a chance to talk to her. She had to go. But she said he was off again to-day,

and that I was to look out for him. He didn't seem so bad, outside of the way he looked at Tillie.

MASHA

Well, I don't know that I'd listen to what Rae says, anyhow. You know how she is. He doesn't like her and she doesn't like him, and she might have excited him.

JOE

Yes, but that shoe and the box and oilcloth? What about them? It looks pretty tough to me.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Ach, if ve could only keep him at home an' take care of him! If only I hed stayed here!

MRS. GREENBAUM

Yes, if you could afford it.

GEORGE GREENBAUM

[*Thoughtfully.*]

I can't see that there is any sense in getting so excited until we know something positively. It's true, things do look bad. Still, there may be nothing. You haven't heard whether she's come home yet, have you?

MASHA

No.

GREENBAUM

Well, I wouldn't inquire, if I were you. If anything is wrong it would look bad afterwards. What I don't see is why you take any more chances with him. He's not right, really—that's plain now, isn't it? I hate to say it, but it's true. I've tried to help him several times, but I'm afraid to recommend him to anybody any more, and we can't use him in our business. He hasn't any sense for that work. He doesn't look right. The best thing to do would be to put him in a home somewhere, I think, where he'd be looked after, and yet where he'd have plenty to do and not feel shut up. He's not a bad boy, actually. He likes to work. He's good-hearted, too. I know that. [MRS. BERCHANSKY *nods.*] But he can't help himself. He's too restless and excitable, and he's crazy about girls. If you let him run around much longer by himself these days, he's sure to come to some harm. He can't help it—the way the girls dress now, with their short skirts and open shirtwaists. It seems to have a bad effect on him. He may not have done anything wrong to-day, but he will some time. He can't help it, and it won't be his fault. [*He sits down.*]

MRS. GREENBAUM

After that look I saw him give Tillie to-day, I'd be afraid to have him around. Really, I would. I think something had better be done.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi! Oi! Oi! Trouble, trouble, trouble!

JOE

Well, why don't we send him away, then? There's no use waitin' any longer, is there?

BERCHANSKY

An asylum! An asylum! Ach! Vell, maybe it is best. After to-night, I know it is.

[*He rubs his chin. Steps are heard on the stairs. Enter* RAE, *decked out in all her finery.*]

RAE

Hello, everybody! Wotcha doin'? Wotcha talkin' about?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi! Oi! Oi! Trouble, trouble, trouble!

BERCHANSKY

[*Folding and unfolding his hands on his breast.*] Plenty to vorry about. Plenty! [*He shakes his head.*]

JOE

It's Isadore again.

RAE

[*Eagerly.*]
Well, what about him? What's he been doin' now?

MRS. GREENBAUM

Oh, nothing that we know of. He was in here a while ago all scratched up, with some burrs on him, and his coat torn, and he wouldn't tell where he'd been, or what he had been doing, or where he was going, and they're afraid he's done something. They found a little girl's shoe in the bedroom, and Kitty Neafie hadn't come home by seven o'clock, and her mother was up here looking for her. Mother's big rag box and the oilcloth from the kitchen table are gone.

RAE

Kitty Neafie! You found a shoe? Let's see it. [*They show it to her. She exclaims.*] An' that big piece of yellow oilcloth out in the kitchen—you say it's gone?

MRS. GREENBAUM

Yes, and papa thinks he came back for some twine. [*She gets up.*]

JOE

He come in an' went into the kitchen an' grabbed a whole handful of cord out of the cupboard, an' run out again. Pop tried to stop him, but Isadore threw him all around the place.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi! Oi! Weh-is-mer!

BERCHANSKY

It is somet'ing! I know! Ach, if I only knew! He's not right. I know now!

MRS. GREENBAUM

Oh, dear, I wonder what he could have wanted with that?

RAE

Tck! Tck! Tck! This is terrible! Kitty Neafie! Goodness, if he's done anything to her—[*she stares*]. Well, I warned ja all. You knew he wasn't right, an' he oughtn't to be out an' around loose. Still you wouldn't listen. Only to-day he tried to stop me in here when I was goin' out—wanted me to kiss him—said I didn't seem like a sister to him. I had to slap his face before he'd let me alone. [*She takes a defiant pose.*] I was almost afraid to leave Esther, only I know he's afraid of

her. [*She walks into the bedroom, taking off her hat.*] Well, I s'pose you'll agree, now, that he oughta be put away.

BERCHANSKY

[*His head down.*]
Tck! Tck! Tck!

MRS. GREENBAUM

[*Softly.*]
After Rae left I watched him, and it was then I saw him look at Tillie so. It frightened me so I took her and went out in the park. I didn't want to say anything because I thought he would be here when we got back, and I didn't want to make mamma and papa feel bad again.

RAE

[*From the bedroom.*]
Did he finish the letters he was writin'?

MASHA

No, the envelopes are here.

GREENBAUM

[*Getting up and walking about.*]
Well, as I say, we don't know anything yet, positively. He may not have done anything, even though

a slipper was here and the child's missing. It does look pretty bad, I'll admit, but I can't see that there's anything to do about it except wait until he comes back, or until we hear something else, then see if we can keep him around here, or get hold of him. You'll have to be careful, though, if he does come back, and not say or do anything to let him know, otherwise he won't go. We'll have to fool him into it. [*He subsides.*]

BERCHANSKY

Rae, how long vuz you here mit Isadore? Ven did you leave?

RAE

About four. Why?

BERCHANSKY

Vell, vot vuz he doing? Vot vuz it he said to you? Did he look queer to you?

RAE

He acted crazy, like he always does, I tell ya! He tried to kiss me. He wouldn't let me alone till I gave him a good slap in the face.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Ach, Rae! Vy did you do dat? He iss your brother. Maybe he vanted to be nice mit you again.

RAE

Say! Him? Cut that! He's dips, I tell ya. Look at what may have happened to-day. [*The others wince.*] It wasn't because I'm his sister that he wanted to kiss me. He's crazy about girls, I tell ya. He can't let 'em alone. He can't help it. He can't let me alone, if ya wanta know. Don't take no chances with *that* hangin' around the house. He's dips, I tell ya. Put 'im away, an' then you can breathe easy. [*She begins to take off her shoes.*] Afterwards we can move away from here, an' nobody'll know where we've gone. We can move up to the Bronx.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi! Oi! Oi!

BERCHANSKY

Rae, you should not talk foolish. Ve vant to find out, don't you understand?

GREENBAUM

[*Seating himself again.*]

Was there anybody else here when you left? I mean before Esther and Tillie came?

RAE

No. Joe had just gone, an' Esther came in afterwards. I thought once I better speak to her before

I went. I was on the edge of comin' back after I got downstairs, but I didn't have time. I knew he wouldn't do anything to any grown-up person, though. He's too big a coward. He always is till you're alone and till it's some one he thinks he can handle. But if Kitty came in here—[*She shakes her head.*] I know him of old. He knows he can't pull it over me, an' so he don't try. That's why he quit. Believe me, I'd never trust a kid with him, though, anywhere.

BERCHANSKY

[*Excitedly, and touching his heart.*]

Rae! Rae! Stop! Ve know! It's bed enough! I ken't stend it! [*He moves uneasily.*]

RAE

Well, when you all come to your senses an' put him away, I'll stop, an' not before. If you'd listened to me this wouldn't 'a' happened to-day—if anything has happened. For a cent, I'd have him put away myself. You'd thank me for it in the long run. You're just afraid of what people'll say, that's all. Believe me, you'd better act before sompin worse happens.

GREENBAUM

[*Amicably.*]

But we've agreed to do that now, Rae.

RAE

Well, it's time, that's all I've gotta say.

BERCHANSKY

[*Shaking his head.*]
Yes. Yes. It's better.

GREENBAUM

[*Getting up.*]
Well, then, to-morrow I'll see if I can find some place, if you want me to. If he comes back, you'd better try and keep him here. Don't irritate him, and don't say anything. Just ask him to stay, and persuade him to, if you can. I'll talk to my lawyer, and let you know. [*He takes out his watch and begins to look around for his hat, as if he were ready to depart.*] We'd better be going, Esther. It's after eleven.

[MRS. GREENBAUM *rises. As she does this, a noise is heard on the stair. It begins as a soft murmur, and increases in volume until it it more or less of an uproar. The shuffling of many feet is heard. As the noise begins and continues, the family stop all conversation, and listen.* JOE, *who is nearest the door, crosses and opens it.*]

A VOICE

Yes, this is where they live.

ANOTHER VOICE

Neafie! They live in here. [*A knocking is heard.*]

A THIRD VOICE

Mr. Neafie! Mr. Neafie!

SEVERAL VOICES

[*In concert.*]
It's terrible, ain't it?
To think it should be their little girl!
Poor Kitty!
Do they know who done it?
No. [*A silence.*]

[*Suddenly the piercing scream of a woman is heard. As all this proceeds, the facial expression of the various members of the family changes. They become concerned, strained.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*In a low voice and with a frightened air, coming near the door.*]
Vot's dat?

JOE

[*Softly, in a troubled voice.*]

It sounds as if something has happened to Kitty Neafie. [*He half closes the door.*]

RAE

[*Who is standing near the bedroom door, speaking out loud.*]

Gee! I wonder what's that, now? [*Crosses to* JOE.]

BERCHANSKY

[*With great intensity, clenching and unclenching his hands.*]

If it should be Isadore!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Crossing to her husband and shaking his arm.*]

Ssh! [*Shakes her head.*]

GREENBAUM

[*Stepping to the table.*]

Listen to me. If it should be anything, no one of you must say anything. You hear? You haven't seen him. You don't know where he is. Put that shoe away! Burn it! [MRS. BERCHANSKY *takes the shoe into the kitchen and returns.*] He hasn't been

here, do you see! [*They all look at him without a word.*] For goodness' sake, don't all look as if something had happened! That's a dead give-away.

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi! Oi! Vot ken ve do? Vot ken ve do? [*She begins to cry.*]

MASHA

[*Sternly.*]

Mamma! Don't cry! You mustn't!

[*More steps are heard on the stairs, as if they were coming up and to the* BERCHANSKY *flat. At the sound of them,* JOE *closes the door.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Walking the floor and twisting his hands.*]

Ach, Gott! Vot comes now? [*A brisk knock is heard. No one offers to go to the door.*]

GREENBAUM

[*Commandingly, to* JOE.]

Open it!

[JOE *opens the door. Enter in a crush four neighbors, tenants of the building—an elderly red-faced woman, greasy, unkempt, fat; a younger, cleaner, but more vacuous and curious woman of thirty-three or four; a young boy of seventeen; a small girl of eleven.*]

THE ELDERLY FAT WOMAN

[*Pushing before the others.*]

Oh, Mrs. Berchansky! Have you heard what's happened to Kitty Neafie? They've just took her away in the ambulance! She's all cut up! They just found her in the lot back here, right back of the house, an' she can't live. The policeman said so. Oh, it's terrible! Poor Mrs. Neafie, she's just fainted an' they can't bring her to an'—[*She pauses for want of breath.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Striking his hands.*]

Ach, Gott! Ach, Gott!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oi! Oi! Oi!

MASHA

[*Heavily.*]

Poor little Kitty!

RAE

[*With great presence of mind, coming forward and staring at the four.*]

Gee, that's terrible! How long ago did it happen?

THE YOUNGER WOMAN

Just now they found her. Nobody knows who done it. She was in a box, an' there was a piece o'

oilcloth over her. [BERCHANSKY *strikes his hands together.*] A man was comin' through the lot an' heard a noise. He went past, an' then he went back. She wasn't dead, but she was almost. She couldn't talk no more. He hurry up an' got the police. Gee, it's awful! The crowd was sompin terrible! Mr. Melka, on the ground floor, was out there, an' he told who she was. He knowed her. They told Mrs. Neafie just now, an' she's almost crazy—she's fainted, but she's come to, an' she's gone to the 'ospital, her an' Mr. Neafie.

BERCHANSKY

Don't talk no more! [*He strikes his head with his hands.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Ach, Mrs. Neafie! [*She strikes her breast.*]

THE LITTLE GIRL

[*Her head between the elder and younger women.*]

Yes, an' o-o-h, she looked terrible! She was all marked up an' bloody. I saw her just when they was takin' her away.

THE YOUNG BOY

Gee, it's fierce! She'll never get well. If dey ever get d' fellow dat did dat, he'll get d' chair.

The police're all around here now. They're lookin' everywhere.

BERCHANSKY

Don't talk! Don't talk!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Nu, dat's enough! Don't say no more, please. Ve must go down——

MRS. GREENBAUM

Tck! Tck! Tck! That poor little girl!

THE ELDER WOMAN

Yes, it's awful! The whole neighborhood's out. [*More noises and voices are heard below. They turn and listen.*] Maybe they've found sompin else.

[*The four depart.* JOE, *nearest the door, half closes it after them.*]

JOE

God!

BERCHANSKY

[*Sinking into a chair.*]

Now, it's over. Vot could be vorse? Now, it vill all come out. Dis is de end!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Oh, if it only vuzn't him! Poor Isadore! Poor Kitty!

GREENBAUM

[*In a low, concerned, earnest voice.*]

Listen to me, all of you! It's pretty bad, but it's best not to say anything—not yet, anyhow. We really don't know that he did it—not yet, anyhow. It looks that way, but don't talk! Don't let on that you know anything! [*To* MASHA.] You've burned the shoe? [*She nods her head.*] Don't ever say anything about it!

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Agonizedly.*]

Yes! Yes!

GREENBAUM

It may not come out—not yet, anyhow. We can have him put away right off. If he's crazy, they can't do anything to him. They can't blame us, anyhow. Some of you had better go down to see Mrs. Neafie when she comes back. Cover that table out there with something, and don't mention the box! As soon as you can, you'd better move away from here—but not too soon. You see——[*As he talks, the curtain descends.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

Scene

The grand jury room of New York County in the Criminal Courts Building, New York City, adjoining the offices of the district attorney and his assistants. The right and rear walls of the stage contain each three and two large windows respectively, reaching nearly to the ceiling. Through them pours a flood of morning light, a pattern of which from the windows, right, marks the floor. The tops of other buildings in the vicinity are to be seen. The space between the two windows at the rear of the stage is broken by a large circular gilt clock, the hands of which stand at ten-forty-five.

he left wall of the stage contains a door of good size which is standing open, showing an exterior office or ante-room of some sort, and some desks protected by a wire cage in which clerks are working. In the center of the room, and facing the door, a semi-circular desk of great size, to the rear of which are twenty-two chairs of exactly the

same pattern, with the exception that the chair in the center is larger each occupied by a grand juror. Between this desk and the door, a table at which is sitting the grand jury clerk, his back to the jury. A few feet from him, and facing the jury, another chair, in which is sitting a short, stout, very phlegmatic-looking German, of about fifty-five, plainly under a strain and nervous. To the right, but between him and the jury, a chair on which has been laid a child's light brown linen dress, soiled and torn, a light green straw hat, a pair of tan stockings, also soiled and torn, a child's slipper, and a suit of light reddish-brown hair, soft and silky, and tied about with a string. Behind the seated jurors, an Assistant District Attorney, standing and facing the witness over their heads. The room is very still. A juror or two coughs and stirs. The woodwork is yellow oak; the walls a pale cream. No pictures or ornamentation of any kind are visible. As the curtain rises, the Assistant District Attorney is just about to address a remark to the witness. In this act a pair of light curtains, the color of the walls of the juryroom, close or open on the remarks of the various witnesses, the while the regular stage curtain remains up.

MILLER

[*With the air of one who has been talking for some little time.*]

Now, Mr. Daubenspeck, if you please, will you kindly tell the grand jury just what occurred on the night of July 17th last? I mean in connection with what you found in the lot back of 1727 First Avenue, this city. Tell it as simply and briefly as you can.

DAUBENSPECK

[*Heavily, and arranging himself slowly.*]

Ya, I do. Ess I say, ich bin, now, ein cabinet-maker by trait und als ich by Sixty-nint' Sthreet near Fairst Affenoo, vuss coming about zehn uhr, ich vuss by a liddle chob in Sixty-fift' Sthreet, und vuss going down troo der lot py Fairst Affenoo back of mein house da, I hert a kynt of noiss or groan, als if some von might haf site a liddle—oder groant, und daraan I sthobbed und kynta looged arount me, so. [*He illustrates.*] Ich couldn't see nudding. Id vuss ganz dunkle. Darauf ich stharted to go on again, but yust as ich dat done ich heered vonce more anudder noiss, und darauf ich vonce more sthobbed again. Der vuss someding—ach, ich weiss nicht ve mann saght "veloren" [*he moves his hands to illustrate the sound*] in der sount, und darauf ich

loogt all arount vonce more und vent back, so ve dreisig oder verizig fuess—[ich hab ess later gemeasured]—und daraan, because der vus a liddle light in a vintow ubstairs in von off der flats, ich saw a kiste—how you say?—box—oder someding, mit a piece off oil clawd offer it, yust as if it hat been coffered py some von, und from unten vuss stickin' aus dass kind's het und her hants und arms—so [*he illustrates*], and she vuss lying on her site, so [*he illustrates*].

MILLER

Yes.

[*Several of the jurors place their elbows on their knees and their chins in their hands and contemplate him fixedly.*]

DAUBENSPECK

Her face vuss very weiss, und der sleef off her tress vuss torn open at der haltz [*he illustrates*], und her neck vuss cut a liddle right here [*he indicates the place*]. At fairst I toud she vuss todt, but I listened, und den I saw dat she vuss still breading. I took der coffer off, und den ich see dat she vuss in a box, yust als she hat herself darein gesezt, und ess hat uber gefallen. It vuss offer on von site, so [*he illustrates*]. She vuss so weiss ich haf gedacht she mide be todt, und I vuss so schkairt—ich vuss almosd

afrait to pull at her, but ich did, but she couldn't speag no more—she vuss nearly todt. So ich hop am strasse—on der sthreet—py 1727 gerunt, und als ich ans eck da kaam dair vair sthanding sechs oder seben manner. Ich hop—I tolt dem dere vuss a liddle girl pack in der lot der gekilt, und dey stharted to run down dere. Daan hab ich nach einer politzei gerufen—ein policeman—und ich vuss say some von shoult on der telefone go. Ich couldn't einer find aber, so ich hab nach meiner frau gerufet [she vuss py der vintow ubstairs dere], und she vuss unten gekommen—down—und uns beiden haben zurick gegangen. Ven ve vuss pack gekommen, der vuss olretty dreisig oder vierzig people da und some von hat olretty einer policeman geholt. Dey vuss telefoning noch der ambulance, und der vuss nudding more zu tuhen.

MILLER

Yes. [*To the jury.*] You understood most of what Mr. Daubenspeck said, didn't you, gentlemen? [*The jurors nod their heads.*] Anything more, Mr. Daubenspeck?

DAUBENSPECK

[*Slowly.*]

No. I didn't see nudding more. Der vair seferal mens benting offer her, und my vife tolt me after-

wards dass she hat gesagt das einer mann hat ihr uber bekommen. Den ich vent mit der police to der station.

MILLER

[*Addressing the jury.*]

He says that his wife told him that Kitty Neafie had said to some one that a man had stabbed her. [*The jurors nod their heads.*] That's all you know, is it, Mr. Daubenspeck?

DAUBENSPECK

Ya, dass ist alles.

MILLER

Gentlemen, do any of you wish to question this witness further? We have a great many to hear. I'll have the clerk write out this testimony so that any of you can examine it at your leisure if you wish. The less time we take in the beginning, the better. You may not need all the testimony that will be offered [*he looks around inquiringly*].

THE FOREMAN

[*Tentatively.*]

Perhaps we'd better let him go for the present.

JUROR SIXTEEN

[*A somber, heavy, taciturn-looking man.*]

Did he say who it was stabbed her, or did she say?

MILLER

Did she say, Mr. Daubenspeck, who killed her?

DAUBENSPECK

Ich hab nicht—I didn't hear. My vife she tolt me afterwards dass she hat gevispered "a man, a man." Den she dies.

JUROR THREE

Was she lying on her face or on her back, did he say, when he first came up?

DAUBENSPECK

On her site, so [*he illustrates*].

JUROR NINE

[*Addressing* MILLER.]

Did he notice or could he tell in that light what the color or pattern of that oilcloth was?

[*As he speaks the inner stage curtains close, then immediately open. As they do so, the clock stands at twelve-fifteen. The sun pattern on the floor has moved. In the witness chair, in the place of* MR. DAUBENSPECK, *sits the elderly fat woman who appeared in the doorway of the* BERCHANSKY *apartment on the night of the murder. She is speaking.*]

MRS. LERSCH

An' as we went in they was all standin' up around the table, an' I says, "Oh, Mr. Berchantsky, did you hear the news? Little Kitty Neafie's been killed!" And at that he throws up his hands like this, and he says, "My God, it's my son Isadore!" An' at that I didn't know wot to say. I felt sorry for 'im, an' I didn't say nothin'.

MILLER

But, Mrs. Lersch! Mrs. Lersch! One moment, please, one moment! This won't do. You're not telling the same story you told me yesterday afternoon at all. I thought you told me that there were three others present beside yourself, and that Mr. Berchansky only exclaimed, "My God!" Isn't that what you told me?

MRS. LERSCH

[*Pausing abstractedly.*]

Did I say that? Well, maybe it was that-a-way, but it seems to me he did say something about his son Isadore. Leastways, it seems so to me. "He done it," or "Oh, my God, I'm sure he done it!" or something like that.

[*The jurors stir impatiently, as though they had been annoyed by previous exaggerations.*

The foreman looks as though he would interject a question.]

MILLER

But, Mrs. Lersch! Mrs. Lersch! One moment, please! This won't do at all! You forget that you are on the witness stand and under oath. You have sworn on the Bible to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. A man's life is in jeopardy here. If you do not tell the truth, the exact facts only—just what you know to be so, not what you think somebody said or what somebody told you afterwards or what you read somewhere—you may send an innocent man to the electric chair, to death, do you understand? An innocent man!

THE FOREMAN

[*Sternly.*]

Tell only what you know, madam. [*He stares and whispers to a neighbor.*]

MRS. LERSCH

[*With some show of uncertainty and distress, rolling her hands.*]

Well, of course, I didn't understand that. I wouldn't want to do anybody any harm, leastways not the Berchantskys. I ain't got a thing against

Mr. Berchantsky. I wouldn't lay a straw in his way. He's a good man, so far as I know. Course, you gotta remember I was very much excited myself at the time, after hearin' the terrible news of poor little Kitty's death, an' I hardly knew what I was doin'. But you better not take my word for it alone. You better let me go, an' ast somebody else. I don't want to do nobody any harm. [*She half rises.*] When I think of poor Kitty, though—[*she begins to weep*].

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY

One moment, please, madam, one moment! Just sit down, please.

MILLER

[*Gently.*]

One moment, Mrs. Lersch. Keep your seat, please. Now, just calm yourself and try to recollect what it was you did hear and see. You needn't be afraid of these gentlemen. They are not here to prosecute you. Now, you have stated that you and several other people left the crowd that was knocking at the door of Mrs. Neafie on the fourth floor, and climbed to the fifth, where Mr. and Mrs. Berchansky lived, and that then you or some one knocked and that some one opened the door. And then what happened? Remember, you're not here to say what you think happened, or what you imagined you saw or

heard, or what some one told you they saw or heard, or what you read, or what somebody else read in the paper, but just what you yourself saw with your own eyes, and heard with your own ears. Now what was it that you saw or heard?

MRS. LERSCH

[*Subdued, in a low voice.*]

Well, as I say, we all went in, an' there was Mr. Berchantsky an' Mrs. Berchantsky, an' Miss Rae Berchantsky, an' Joe, an' several other people standin' around, an' they all looked kind o' queer to me, as though they might be excited about something. An' I says to Mrs. Berchantsky, "Oh, Mrs. Berchantsky, have you heard the terrible news about Kitty Neafie? She's been murdered—stabbed fifty times—an' there's a young man they think done it [*the jury gives evidence of new astonishment*]. At that they all gathered around, an' Mr. Berchantsky throws up his hands, or that's the way it seemed to me, an' says sompin—"Oh, my God!" or sompin like that, an' Mrs. Berchantsky, if I remember right—I'm not sure about Mrs. Berchantsky, I was that excited myself I begun to cry, an' then they all wanted to know who done it, an' how it all happened, an' between explainin' an' other people talkin', I forget, kinda, just what did happen, but I know we went downstairs, an'

Mrs. Droney, she says to me—now, I don't just remember whether it was that night or the next day—but anyhow, she says——

MILLER

[*Wearily, with the air of one desirous of ending this particular examination.*]

Well, now, Mrs. Lersch, we're not interested in what Mrs. Droney or anybody else said to you at this or any other time. As a matter of fact, you didn't know then whether there had been one or fifty stab wounds found on the body, did you?

MRS. LERSCH

Well, now, Mrs. Droney was sayin' last Wednesday——

MILLER

[*With a show of irritation, in a loud voice.*]

You didn't know at that time whether there was one or seventy wounds on the body, did you?

MRS. LERSCH

[*Humbly.*]

No, sir.

MILLER

So you couldn't have told the Berchansky family of those?

MRS. LERSCH

Well, Mrs. Droney——

MILLER

[*Sonorously.*]

Never mind Mrs. Droney. Could you?

MRS. LERSCH

No, sir.

MILLER

And as for a young man having been suspected, you really never thought of that at that time, did you?

MRS. LERSCH

Well, Mrs. Droney——

MILLER

[*Angrily.*]

Never mind Mrs. Droney. Forget her. Just stick to what you saw and heard in the Berchansky flat at the time you were in it. Did you, or did you not, see or hear anything which caused you to think that any one connected with that particular family was in any way connected with this crime?

[*As he talks the inner curtains close, and immediately open again. This time they disclose* MRS. BERCHANSKY *seated in the witness chair. She is very pale, her hands and face*

exceedingly thin. She is dressed in a black skirt, small bonnet, and black shawl. She sits with drooped head, staring at the floor. The hands of the clock now stand at twelve-forty-five, and the sunlight has left the room. The gaze of the Assistant District Attorney, and that of all the jurors, is fixed intently on her.]

MILLER

Tell us, Mrs. Berchansky, why it was you made up your mind to move so quickly after this happened? [MRS. BERCHANSKY *does not answer.*] Why did you move two days after the crime?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*After a long pause, and twisting her fingers.*] My family vunted it.

MILLER

Yes. Why?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

It vuz too hot. Ve didn't like de place. [*She lifts her hands slightly.*]

MILLER

Yes. Well, how long before this was it that you or your family made up your minds that it was too hot?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Slowly.*]

Maybe's a month—maybe's two.

MILLER

Then it was some time in May or June that you did this?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Yes.

MILLER

Can't you remember which month exactly?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

No.

MILLER

Well, now, it wasn't so very warm in May, was it?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*After a long pause.*]

It vuz vorm, yes.

MILLER

[*Restlessly, as though he had been examining a long time.*]

Mrs. Berchansky, how long before the night of the murder was it that you had last seen your son Isadore at your apartment, or anywhere—how long?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Turning and entwining her fingers. She does not look up.*]

Maybe's von month—maybe's two or three.

MILLER

[*Sternly.*]

Look at me, Mrs. Berchansky. Look at the jury. Lift your head. [*Slowly the witness elevates a wan and haggard face—then lowers it again.*] Are you telling the truth?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Yes.

MILLER

Well, Mrs. Berchansky, there was a newspaper reporter in that chair not more than a half hour ago who testified that when he called on you at the apartment of your daughter, Mrs. Greenbaum, on the upper west side, ten days after you had moved from 1727 First Avenue, you told him that you had not seen your son Isadore in two weeks. That would have been two days before the murder. Now, what did you mean by that? [*She does not answer.*] Mrs. Berchansky, answer me! What did you mean by that?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Maybe's von month—maybe's two.

MILLER

Listen to me, Mrs. Berchansky. Don't answer in a routine way, without thinking. You are now in the witness chair, before this grand jury, under oath. The newspaper man said that at that time you said to him that you had seen your son three days before the murder. Now, whom are we to believe—you, or this reporter? [*He pauses and waits.*]

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Without looking up.*]

Maybe's von month—maybe's two.

MILLER

[*Irritably.*]

Don't make that stereotyped reply always! Did some one tell you to say that?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*After a time, folding and unfolding her hands.*]

No.

MILLER

Mrs. Berchansky, you swore just now to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Is this the truth you are telling now?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Without looking up.*]

Yes.

MILLER

You swear to that, do you—by all that you hold sacred?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*After a pause.*]

Yes.

MILLER

Now, Mrs. Berchansky, isn't it true that your son was at your home the very day and evening that the crime was committed—that you and your husband had a quarrel with him, and that he ran out of the house, and that you or your husband called after him down the stairs?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Stirring, and then subsiding after a pause.*]

No.

MILLER

You deny that he was in your house the day or evening of the crime?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Yes.

MILLER

Or a day or two before?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Yes.

MILLER

Or a day or two after?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

Yes.

MILLER

You swear on your sacred honor—by the life of your husband and your children, that this is true?

MRS. BERCHANSKY

[*Tightening her fingers for the least fraction of a second.*]

Yes.

[*The inner curtains close. As they open again the clock stands at two-ten. The clerk is completing the roll call of the afternoon session. All but three jurors are in their seats.*]

MILLER

[*To the clerk.*]

Call Miss Rae Berchansky.

[*The clerk goes to the door, whispers the call to the doorkeeper, who in turn calls it out-*

side. In a moment or two RAE BERCHANSKY *appears, dressed in white linen skirt—pearl buttons down the front—a white starched shirtwaist, black tie, black sailor hat with a white band, black slippers, white stockings, and carries a black bag in her hand. She seats herself in the witness chair, rises, then sinks back again—very brisk and self-sufficient.*]

THE CLERK

Name, please?

RAE

Rae Berchansky.

THE CLERK

Address?

RAE

2221 Portchester Avenue, Bronx.

CLERK

Business?

RAE

Manicuress.

MILLER

[*As the clerk writes.*]

Now, Miss Berchansky, the grand jury, through me, would like to ask you a few questions in regard

to the death of Kitty Neafie on July 17th last. Will you kindly tell me, in your own way, what, if anything, you know about this case?

RAE

[*Briskly.*]
I don't know anything!

MILLER

[*Archly.*]
Not anything?

RAE

Nothing except what I've seen in the papers—mostly lies.

MILLER

Now, Miss Berchansky, will you kindly tell the jury where you were on the afternoon and evening of July 17th last?

RAE

I was at Coney Island.

MILLER

When did you leave your home to go to Coney Island?

RAE

Oh, about two in the afternoon.

MILLER

And when did you return home again?

RAE

About eleven or twelve at night.

MILLER

Can't you remember exactly at what hour?

RAE

No, sir. It was between eleven and twelve, I think.

MILLER

[*Suavely.*]

Now, Miss Berchansky, this is a very trying case, and we're only anxious to find the perpetrator of this very heinous crime—not to throw unnecessary suspicion on any one, your family in particular—so will you be kind enough to tell this jury how long before the day or hour of this crime, or after, was it that you last saw your brother Isadore?

RAE

[*Coolly.*]

It's been a little over two months, now, I think.

MILLER

You haven't seen him in all that time?

RAE

No, sir.

MILLER

Nor heard from him?

RAE

No, sir.

MILLER

Has any member of your family, in so far as you know?

RAE

Not that I know of.

MILLER

Well, now, he usually came around the house once a week or so, didn't he, up to that time?

RAE

Up to what time?

MILLER

Up to the time you last saw him. Up to the night of the murder.

RAE

I just told you I didn't see him on the night of the murder, or the day, either.

MILLER

Yes. . . . I remember now. Up to the time you last saw him, I mean—two months ago.

RAE

Oh, he came home whenever he felt like it—once in two or three weeks, I should say.

MILLER

And then suddenly he stopped coming?

RAE

Oh, I wouldn't call it sudden. We never knew when he was comin', or when he was goin' again.

MILLER

Quite so! Quite so! Now, Miss Berchansky, it has been suggested here by one witness and another that your brother was not exactly right in his mind, that he had an aberration or delusion—an abnormal interest in little girls. Is that true?

RAE

He's always been all right, so far as I know.

MILLER

You're positive as to that?

RAE

Yes, sir.

MILLER

Nothing wrong with him whatsoever in so far as you know?

RAE

So far as I know, no.

MILLER

In so far as you can remember, you have never seen the least little thing wrong with him mentally?

RAE

No, sir. Not that I recall.

MILLER

Well, then, how do you explain that on March 15, 1914, he was sentenced to two years in a State penitentiary of this State for attempted—for assaulting —[*he pauses*]—a little girl? You knew of that, didn't you?

RAE

[*Eyeing him fixedly.*]
Yes, sir.

MILLER

Well, would you consider that the deed of an absolutely normal person, assuming, of course, that the jury did not err in its judgment?

RAE

Well, *he* never admitted that he did it, did he? A jury might be wrong once in a while, mightn't it?

MILLER

[*With the shadow of a condescending smile, and rubbing his chin.*]

Yes, a jury *might* be wrong once in a while. But, tell us, Miss Berchansky, your brother did suffer from a nervous affliction of the left arm, didn't he—a jerking like this [*he illustrates*]?

RAE

[*With some hesitation and show of anger.*]

Yes, sir.

MILLER

Ever since he was born—is that not true?

RAE

[*Snappishly.*]

Yes!

MILLER

Still you are convinced that there was absolutely nothing wrong with him mentally in any way?

RAE

[*Defiantly.*]
Yes, I am!

MILLER

And also you are absolutely sure that he wasn't at home the afternoon or evening or night of the crime?

RAE

Not that I know of.

MILLER

Nor at any time within forty-eight hours before or after the news of Kitty Neafie's death?

RAE

Not that I know of.

MILLER

Is this the absolute truth? Remember, you are under oath here.

RAE

Yes, sir.

MILLER

Do you know for certain that he was not there?

RAE

No one told me that he was. No, sir.

MILLER

But you're not positive that he was not there?

RAE

Well, if he had been, it seems to me I would have heard about it.

MILLER

But you're not positive?

RAE

No, sir.

MILLER

Miss Berchansky, do you know a Mrs. Margaret Lindstrom?

RAE

Yes, sir.

MILLER

Where does she live?

RAE

I don't know where she lives now, but I know where she did live.

MILLER

Where was that?

RAE

On the floor below us at 1727 First Avenue.

MILLER

You know her personally?

RAE

I've seen her.

MILLER

You don't know her to talk to?

RAE

Oh, I've said "Good morning," or nodded to her in the hall.

MILLER

Miss Berchansky, if there was a loud noise in the Lindstrom apartment, an angry argument of some kind, do you suppose you could hear it in your apartment upstairs?

RAE

I don't know whether I could or not. I never heard a loud argument down there.

MILLER

So you couldn't say, supposing there was a loud argument or quarrel of some kind in your apartment, whether the Lindstroms or any other family immediately around you could hear it or not?

RAE

No; I don't think they could.

MILLER

You mean they couldn't hear such a noise?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

Why not?

RAE

Because of the noise in the street up there.

MILLER

It's pretty bad, is it?

RAE

It was. It was sompin fierce!

MILLER

Now, Miss Berchansky, isn't it a fact that your brother Isadore was home the very day of the death

of Kitty Neafie, and that your father and mother had a quarrel with him, and that he ran downstairs about eight-thirty of the night of the crime, and that your father shouted his name after him? Isn't that true?

RAE

I don't know anything about it. I was at Coney Island.

MILLER

Well, you would have heard of it if he had been there, wouldn't you?

RAE

[*Calmly.*]
Yes, I think so.

MILLER

But you never heard anything about it?

RAE

No, I didn't.

MILLER

[*Suavely.*]
Well, now, Miss Berchansky, will you explain to this jury why it was that on the evening of July 21st last, or thereabouts, about five days after this crime had been committed, and about two days after your family had moved from 1727 First Avenue, that

you returned to the house of your friend, Miss Bertha Solomon, at 1711 First Avenue, and secured a picture of yourself, and one of your brother Joe which contained a portrait of your brother Isadore?

RAE

[*With considerable surprise and hesitation.*]

Well, I wanted them, that's why. [*She stirs uneasily.*]

MILLER

Yes. . . . Why?

RAE

Oh, I didn't want any old cheap pictures of mine floatin' around back there in that neighborhood, that's all.

MILLER

Yes—but why not in *that* neighborhood? Wasn't it good enough for you?

RAE

[*Hesitatingly.*]

Well, it's a cheap neighborhood, that's all. I never liked it, and so long as we were goin' away, I thought I'd not leave anything of mine by which people could follow us up.

MILLER

That was the only reason, was it?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

You hadn't committed any crime, had you?

RAE

No, of course not.

MILLER

Nor any member of your family, let us say?

RAE

I said I didn't know anything about that.

MILLER

[*Sweetly.*]

To be sure! To be sure! You just didn't think the neighborhood was good enough for you? Was that it?

RAE

Well, something like that.

MILLER

Miss Berchansky, do you know a girl by the name of Peterson—Zella Peterson?

RAE

Yes, sir.

MILLER

Where does she work?

RAE

At the same place I do.

MILLER

Where is that?

RAE

At the Marie Manicure Parlors, in Sixth Avenue.

MILLER

She is a manicure, is she not?

RAE

Yes, sir.

MILLER

She's a rather good friend of yours, isn't she?

RAE

Well, we've been friends, yes.

MILLER

Isn't she, any longer?

RAE

Well, I suppose so. I haven't seen her recently.

MILLER

Do you remember asking her, on the morning of the 22d of July last, what she thought of the Neafie case?

RAE

[*With some hesitation.*]
No, sir.

MILLER

You don't recall asking her if she thought in case the murderer of Kitty Neafie were found, and he had brothers and sisters, and a father and mother, whether his whole family, in her judgment, would be disgraced on account of it?

RAE

I saw she said I did, in the papers, but I didn't. No, sir.

MILLER

You didn't?

RAE

No, I didn't!

MILLER

Did you ask her anything at all about the case? What she thought of it, or anything like that?

RAE

No, sir.

MILLER

Not a word? Never even referred to it?

RAE

No, sir.

MILLER

Well, it was a very startling case to you, wasn't it?

RAE

[*Hesitatingly.*]
Yes.

MILLER

It must have shocked you a great deal at the time, being in your neighborhood—next door to you?

RAE

It certainly did.

MILLER

And it was on your mind a great deal at the time, wasn't it?

RAE

Well, not any more than on anybody else's, I guess, but it was, yes.

MILLER

Yet you didn't even mention it to Miss Peterson?

RAE

Not that I recall, no.

MILLER

Her manicure table is right next to yours, isn't it?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

And you used to walk home with her occasionally across Forty-second Street?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

Frequently, since July 17th, haven't you?

RAE

I don't remember exactly whether I did or not.

MILLER

Oh, come now. You can remember that, I'm sure.

RAE

[Stiffly.]

I say I don't remember exactly whether I did or not.

MILLER

Yet you never mentioned this case to her—not once?

RAE

Well, I may have. I don't remember. Not that I recall.

MILLER

And yet it was in all the papers at the time?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

And it occurred right next door to your home?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

And it was in your mind—some?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

But yet you can't remember that you ever mentioned it to your friend, the girl you used to walk home with—whose table was right next to yours in the manicure parlor?

RAE

No, sir.

MILLER

[*With considerable emphasis.*]

Not even if I tell you that your friend Miss Peterson was in here not more than an hour ago, and, sitting in that chair, testified under oath that you did ask her, and that you looked worried? Now, is that true, or isn't it?

RAE

It's not true.

MILLER

She lied, did she?

RAE

If she said that, she did. Yes, sir.

MILLER

Miss Berchansky, you say you have lived at home with your family right along, all your life?

RAE

Yes, sir.

MILLER

Well, now, tell the grand jury why it was that your family decided to move all of a sudden, on July 19th last.

RAE

We didn't decide to move all of a sudden. We'd been talkin' of it for months.

MILLER

Why?

RAE

Well, it was too hot up there under the roof, and too high up.

MILLER

You wanted a cooler apartment, did you, and one lower down?

RAE

The family did, yes, sir, and so did I.

MILLER

Well, can you tell the grand jury why it was that your father and mother, or whoever it was decided on this, chose to move in the middle rather than at

the end of the month? People generally choose to move at the end of the month, don't they?

RAE

Oh, I don't know. We didn't.

MILLER

[*Gently.*]
Well, I know, but people generally do, don't they?

RAE

Well, I don't know about other people. I only know about us. We moved in the middle of the month, the time before that.

MILLER

When was that?

RAE

February 19, 1916.

MILLER

Five months before this crime was committed?

RAE

Yes.

MILLER

And you're sure this short stay of only five months had nothing to do with anything your brother Isadore did at this time?

RAE

No,—I mean yes.

MILLER

[*Coming around in front, between the witness and the jury.*]

If the jury pleases, I would like to excuse Miss Berchansky for the moment. We can recall her in a little while, if we choose. I have another witness I would like to present at this time. I believe it will throw a little extra light on this case, and may save your time and mine. [*The jurymen nod their heads. To* RAE.] You are excused for the present, Miss Berchansky. Please don't leave the building. I may want you again. [RAE *goes out. To the clerk.*] Call Rufus Bush.

THE CLERK

[*Going to the door and speaking to the attendant.*]

Rufus Bush!

THE ATTENDANT

[*Outside.*]

Rufus Bush! Rufus Bush!

[*The door opens, and a lank, slithery, badly-washed man of about forty-three, in obviously his best Sunday store clothes, enters. He has large red hands, large feet, a leathery, weather-tanned face, and a long strong nose and jaw. He walks briskly forward and starts to take the chair indicated, but is interrupted by the clerk, who holds out a Bible to him.*]

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY

Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

BUSH

I do.

[*He sits down, sees the little dress, hat and shoe on the chair, and stares.*]

MILLER

[*From his position behind the foreman once more.*]

Now, Mr. Bush, you moved the furniture and belongings of one Aaron Berchansky from his apart-

ment or flat at 1727 First Avenue some time during the latter part of July, didn't you?

RUFUS BUSH

Yes, sir.

MILLER

Just when was that? Do you recall?

BUSH

[*With a great show of importance.*]
It was the mornin' of July 19th, 1916.

MILLER

Well, now, Mr. Bush, where did you take that furniture?

BUSH

To the Central Union Storage house at Avenue A and East Twenty-third Street, New York City.

MILLER

Now, Mr. Bush, please tell the grand jury just as briefly as you can what were the circumstances under which you came to move this furniture—who came to see you about it, what they said, what you did, what you saw, how whoever you saw acted, and so on. Be as brief and direct as you can, now, please.

BUSH

[*Straightening himself in his chair, smoothing his hair, and wetting his lips.*]

Well, as I was sayin' to you yesterday, Mr. Miller, I was standin' at the corner of First Avenue and Sixty-seventh Street—I keep my wagon standin' there when I ain't got nothin' else to do—when who should come up to me but this here, now, Mis' Berchantsky. She's a little woman, kinda thin-like, with one of them black wigs the Jewish women wears, an' a white band or sompin around her head kinda tied over her ears like [*several members of the jury stir impatiently*], an' she says to me—I can't give you her exack langwidge—but she says to me, "Could you come right over with me now to 1727 First Avenue an' git a load o' furniture out o' there for me, right away quick?" an' I says, "Sure, I could. Where is it you want it moved to, madam?" an' she says, "I don't want it moved to no house—just to a storage warehouse, only, will you come right away, if you're comin', because I gotta git out o' there before three o'clock to-day," she says. An' I says to myself, "That's funny! She must be tryin' to make a get-a-way from 'er husband or the landlord, or sompin like that," an' bein' she was kinda nervous an' a-fidgitin' with 'er hands this-a-way [*he illus-*

trates], I felt sorry for 'er, so I jumps on my wagon an' drives right over there. I was thinkin' that maybe, since it was a hurry-up case, I might git a good tip extra, but I didn't. [*The jury laughs.*]

MILLER

Yes—go on.

BUSH

Well, when I seen the place, I wuz a little su'prised again, because most people when they send for a movin' man only have part of their stuff ready to be took out, an' the rest we gotta git together ourselves, but she had everything done up as neat as a pin—you oughta seen it—an' there was an old man with one o' them there little kike caps on 'is head, an' he wuz a-bustlin' around an' a-tyin' up things, an' sayin' "Ga swind! Ga swind!"—or sompin like that. There was a girl there, too, a cripple-like, hobblin' around on a cane an' helpin' in one way an' another.

MILLER

Yes?

BUSH

Well, the old lady kep' sayin' "Hurry, hurry, please!" so much that I was sure there must be sompin up. I got the furniture out as quick as I

could, an' got it down there to Twenty-third Street an' Avenue A, an' there she was, a-waitin' for me on the corner, an' she paid me, an' I give 'er the receipt, an' that's all I know.

MILLER

And you didn't get any tip?

BUSH

No, sir.

MILLER

Well, gentlemen, unless you can think of something more to ask this witness, I should like to excuse him also, and call some one else that we have waiting. We can recall him at any time, you know. [*A silence follows this.*] We have quite a number of witnesses still, and it may be that we shall not need all their testimony [*the jury nod their heads in acquiescence.*] You're excused, Mr. Bush. Please don't leave the building at present.

BUSH

No, sir. [*Goes out.*]

MILLER

[*To the clerk.*]
Call Mr. Berchansky.
[*The clerk goes to the door.*]

THE DOORMAN

[*Outside.*]

Aaron Berchansky! Aaron Berchansky!

[*Enter* AARON BERCHANSKY. *He is very pale and nervous and careworn, and is dressed in a plain, threadbare black suit, the sleeves and trouser legs of which are too long and worn at elbows and knees, a black ready-made bow tie, black derby hat, rather loose shoes. As he enters he observes the chair with the child's clothes on it, stops, puts his hands before his eyes, falters, then walks lamely on to the witness chair. His manner is that of one who is enduring intense suffering and strain. The clerk rises and holds out the Bible.*

THE FOREMAN OF THE JURY

[*Rising.*]

Do you solemnly affirm that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[BERCHANSKY *nods, looks at the chair, then looks away again.*]

THE CLERK

Name, please?

BERCHANSKY

Aaron Berchansky.

CLERK

Address?

BERCHANSKY

2221 Portchester Avenue.

CLERK

Business?

BERCHANSKY

[*With some hesitation.*]
Thread and needles.

MILLER

You have a store where you sell thread and needles, have you, Mr. Berchansky?

BERCHANSKY

No. [*He looks at the chair again.*]

MILLER

Well, what kind of a business is it then, Mr. Berchansky? Will you kindly explain?

BERCHANSKY

[*Very softly.*]

I sell to my customers. I carry my goods in a bag.

MILLER

Yes. Who are your customers, Mr. Berchansky?

BERCHANSKY

Some shops, some that make shirts, cloaks, pants. [*He glances at the chair.*] I hev customers.

MILLER

[*Overawed by his sad presence and speaking in a soothing voice.*]

Mr. Berchansky, we are engaged in the very unpleasant task of unraveling, or attempting to do so, the details of a terrible crime, with some of the details of which you are already familiar. I shall have to ask you some very personal questions, Mr. Berchansky, some very trying ones, I am sorry to say, but it will not be with any intention of injuring your feelings. I hope you will understand this, that it is a duty on my—on our —part—on the part of the law and the state which makes the law—not mere inquisitiveness. [*As he speaks,* BERCHANSKY *continues to stare at the chair.*]

Now, Mr. Berchansky, will you kindly tell the jury how many children you have?

BERCHANSKY

[*Heavily.*]

Two boys an' three girls, living. The rest are dead. [*He picks at his coat lapel.*]

MILLER

And how old is your oldest boy—Isadore is his name, is it not?

BERCHANSKY

[*Starting, and with an effort.*]

Yes. Twenty-one.

MILLER

And the youngest?

BERCHANSKY

Seventeen.

MILLER

Were all your children born in this country?

BERCHANSKY

All but my oldest. She is dead now.

[*He clenches and unclenches his fingers.*]

MILLER

And where were you born?

BERCHANSKY

In Odessa.

MILLER

Russia?

BERCHANSKY

Yes.

MILLER

And your wife?

BERCHANSKY

The same place.

[*As he talks, his glance constantly strays to the chair. He folds and unfolds his hands.*]

MILLER

[*Coming out from behind the foreman, picking up* KITTY NEAFIE'S *dress, hair and stockings, and placing himself squarely in front of the witness. He half holds the articles before him, as if exhibiting them. As he does so,* BERCHANSKY *shrinks back slightly.*]

Mr. Berchansky, you knew little Kitty Neafie, didn't you?

BERCHANSKY

[*His voice rising to a thin, half-vibrant, half-smothered cry.*]

Yes.

MILLER

She came to your house fairly often, did she not?

BERCHANSKY

[*In the same high, suppressed key.*]

Vunce in a vile. Yes. [*He picks at his coat.*]

MILLER

Now, Mr. Berchansky, this grand jury is greatly concerned to know who, if any one, connected with your family knows anything about the murder of this little girl, whose hair and torn clothes you see here. It has been alleged by one person and another —newspaper reporters, the police and detectives, your neighbors—that your oldest boy is of such a disposition and character as to warrant the fear and the suspicion that he may have had something to do with it. He is not exactly of sound mind, is he?

BERCHANSKY

[*Staring before him, as if meditating something.*]

Nu . . . yes. He is all right.

MILLER

He is absolutely of sound mind—you are sure of that?

BERCHANSKY

Yes.

MILLER

But he did serve two years in a penitentiary, did he not, for an assault on a little girl?

BERCHANSKY

[*Half-rising, then sinking back again.*]

Yes.

MILLER

[*Somewhat sympathetically.*]

And it is equally true, is it not, that he is, or was, still interested in little girls up to a very little while ago—in some of them, anyhow? Is not that true?

BERCHANSKY

[*Stirring, with an effort to speak, but unable to do so.*]

Nu. [*He shakes his head negatively.*]

MILLER

Mr. Berchansky, I do not want to make this examination too difficult for you. We all realize how try-

ing your position must be. We know you are a father. We know that you are fond of your boy and would like to protect him, but the law is the law, Mr. Berchansky, and the law compels us to seek out the slayer of this harmless little girl, whosoever he may be, and bring him before the bar of justice in order that he may be dealt with according to the law. It is only right, it is our duty to ourselves, to our fellow-men, to humanity, to the stricken parents of this poor little dead girl whose clothes you see here—[*He moves the dress from one arm to the other.*] Now, I shall have to ask you to tell me, on your sacred honor: Do you, or do you not, know whether your oldest boy Isadore had anything to do with the taking of this little girl's life?

[*He pauses, looking earnestly at the witness.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Staring at the dress, then suddenly rising. As he does so, he sways to and fro as if ill, moves his hands to his face, then beats them together.*]

Nu! Nu! Take dem avay! Take dem avay! I kent stend it! I kent stend it! It is too much! I hev lied! My vife, she hes lied! My daughter Rae, she hes lied! My son Joseph, he hes lied! Ve all hev lied! It is true. My son did it. He killed her!

He is not right! Since he vuz so small [*he indicates with a gesture*], he vuz not right. I know it all de time! It vuz killing me! Here it hurts me, here, here! [*He strikes his heart.*] I hev vatched, I hev prayed. Ach, Gott! Since two veeks now already, I know. But he is my boy! I could not speak.

[*He chokes.*]

MILLER

Mr. Berchansky——

BERCHANSKY

Vait! Vait! You shell hear me! Now I shell tell all! All! I told him vot to do! He should kill himself, I told him! He wrote vun day I should meet him in Grend Street. I go to Grend Street. He vuz dere on de street. Even den he vuz not right, but he knew. He told me how it vuz—she come in vile ve vuz in de park, he choked an' smodered her, he carried her up de stairs an' over de roof to de next house. I told him I could not forgive him, his mudder an' sisters an' brudder could not forgive him—de best t'ing vuz for him to jump in de river an' drown himself. Den he lef' me, an' I hevn't seen him since. [*He pauses, shaking.*] He is gone now. Maybe he is dead. So, it is better. I pray he is. [*He sobs.*] I hev vatched, I hev verked, I hev tried to be a good fader—no vun knows how hard I hev tried.

Ach! Ve hev verked, all of us, ve hev saved. De ot'-ers are all good. Vy he should be so, I don't know. Since he vuz twelve he hes not been right, but he hes not alvays been bed. He hes been a good boy, too. He hes a good heart. He hes verked. He vuz not quite right here. [*He points to his forehead.*] Maybe it vuz not all his fault. [*He breaks down completely and sobs. His voice sinks to a low murmur.*] Maybe I hev not done all dat I should. It is so hard. [*He ceases talking and sobs between his hands. Some of the jury take out their handkerchiefs, others lower their heads.*] Dat dis should heppen to me, now dat I am old. [*He shakes his head in silence.*]

MILLER

Calm yourself, Mr. Berchansky. Calm yourself. This jury understands. It sympathizes with you completely. Most of the gentlemen here have children of their own. [*He lays a hand on* BERCHANSKY'S *arm.*] Sit down. You can tell us the rest of this when you are calmer.

[*He forces* BERCHANSKY *back into his seat.*]

BERCHANSKY

[*Weeping, and yet speaking through his fingers.*]

No. He could not help it! He is not right. He is

not a bed boy. He hes a good heart. If I hed been a better fader maybe dis vould not heppen. Maybe ve did not understand him. [*He weeps in silence.*]

MILLER

[*After a pause, to the jury.*]

Gentlemen, I am sure that you will agree with me that the rest of Mr. Berchansky's testimony can be taken later. He is too much overcome to continue. There is no need, I think, for our examining any further into this case.

[*As* MILLER *speaks, the outer curtain is slowly descending. The foreman nods his head.*]

CURTAIN

ACT IV

ACT IV

Scene 1

A stuffy, wretchedly furnished hall bedroom on the top floor of a five-story tenement, the very appearance and atmosphere of which suggests heat, odors, poverty. Time, about four-thirty of a late August afternoon. A door, left, gives onto a stair landing, the squeaky boards of which can be heard. A small window, back center, shows chimneys, roofs, copings—a red, dry, colorless prospect. The windows are broken, patched and dirty. The wall-paper is a faded yellowish-gray, showing patches of paper of another color underneath. The bedstead of white iron enamel is slimsy, has peeled, and is creaky. It is unmade and tousled, with soiled sheets, a dirty pillow-case, and a soiled and torn bedspread. A more or less dilapidated chair stands at the foot of it. On the floor, a scrap of ragged carpet. Against the right wall, center, a cheap bureau or chest of drawers, above which hangs a small oblong mirror, the upper corners of which are curved, and the glass of which is cracked. A soiled and torn cover of some kind

graces this bureau. From the ceiling in the center of the room descends a one-burner gas pipe. On the wall, over the bed, an old fly-specked poster of a girl in red advertises a face cream.

When the curtain rises the stage is empty. Enter ISADORE. *He closes the door quickly, stands with his hand on the knob, one ear to the crack above. Several copies of different evening papers are in his hands. He is haggard, shabby, a full week's growth of beard on his face. His suit is worn and soiled, his shoes dusty, and his hair, which is partially concealed by a broken straw hat, is tousled and frowzy. He looks pale, hungry, half-wild. As he stands there his left shoulder jerks.*

ISADORE

[*Looking straight before him with a stiff, expectant stare.*]

I thought he was followin' me. [*Pauses and listens a while longer, tries the key to be sure it is turned, listens once more, then locks it again. His shoulder jerks.*] They ain't got me yet! It's the red ones, that's it. [*He listens once more, then goes over to the window and unfolds one of the papers, which reveals his picture nearly quarter-page size. Type five inches high, and plainly visible to the audi-*

ence, reads: "*FIND ISADORE BERCHANSKY!*" *He stares at it, then speaks in a low voice.*] They're after me, all right, for fair. I ought to 'a' gone away in the first place. [*He strikes at something.*] G'wan away! Well, I don't look like that now. [*He holds up the paper and examines his picture with care, then drops it and opens a second and a third, each one revealing a large picture and blazing with type. As he does so his shoulder jerks. He studies the headlines. After each one he exclaims*: "*Gee!*" *then drops it. Wearily.*] I guess it ain't no use. They'll sure get me. It's the red ones. That's it. That's the trouble. They won't let me alone. [*He strikes at something.*] G'wan! This shoulder an' arm'll give me away, if nothin' else does. [*His shoulder jerks.*] It's the red ones, that's the trouble. If they'd let me alone I'd be all right, but I can't work. They won't let me. [*Stares and strikes at something.*] G'wan! It's that two thousand dollar reward makes everybody so anxious. [*His shoulder jerks.*] But I'm sick now, an' dirty, an' they don't know me. [*Pauses and reflects.*] Poor mom! How she must 'a' suffered! An' pop! [*His shoulder jerks.*] He couldn't stand it, he said. Well, I don't blame him. I can't, either, much longer. G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] I'm crazy, all right, an' I'm afraid to die. [*Pauses.*]

Sneakin' around this way! [*He wipes his eyes on his sleeve. His shoulder jerks.*] If I had the nerve, I'd kill myself. I oughta. Pop said I should. I've been tryin' to do it for three days, now. G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] I ain't right, I tell you! An' I never was! [*His shoulder jerks.*] It's the red ones, that's it. They won't let me alone. These spells keep comin' quicker an' quicker. [*His shoulder jerks and his face contorts slightly. He goes before the mirror, stares at himself, then darkens savagely. A weird expression passes over his face. He strikes at something.*] G'wan! [*He takes off his hat and coat and hangs them on a nail, then goes over to the window, picks up a paper and looks at it.*] Gee, what liars newspapers are! G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] Here it says I tried to lure little girls to my room four years ago, an' I never even thought of it then. [*Strikes at something.*] I didn't have the nerve, an' I wasn't as crazy then as I am now. [*Strikes at something.*] An' this arrestin' men all over the country for me—they make me sick. [*He stirs irritably. His shoulder jerks.*] G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] Nineteen they've arrested so far, an' they ain't got me yet. [*He smiles and examines a small item closely.*] If they don't get me pretty soon they'll hang some other fellow for me. That's the way they do! These fly

cops! [*His lip curls, his shoulder jerks. He strikes at something. He tears off a small corner of a newspaper and writes on it, then puts it on the wall above his bed. Talks as he does it.*] G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] An' that parole officer! [*Indignantly.*] What a liar! He says I broke my parole. I never did! G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] He said not to come no more unless he sent for me—the damned faker. [*He pauses again, looks out the window, stares at some imaginary thing in the corner, goes over to the door and listens, then comes back to the bureau and looks at himself. His shoulder jerks. As he does so, his expression changes, he loses control of his normal self and makes queer faces at his likeness in the mirror. Suddenly he crumples up the newspapers in his hand, hurls them at his image, then jumps back and seizes the one chair. As he does so he imagines he hears a noise, pauses, puts down the chair, goes over to the door and listens. There is no sound. He half-strikes at something, then straightens up. Once more his mood appears to change. He goes over to the bed and lifts one corner of the mattress, extracting from under it a considerable length of rubber gas tubing. Surveying it, and looking at the gas jet.*] It's the red ones, that's the trouble—the blacks ain't so bad. They wouldn't hurt me, no-

how. What's the use, though? I'm crazy, an' they're sure to get me. I can't beat 'em. G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] I might as well quit now. [*His shoulder jerks. He measures the distance from the gas jet to the bed to see if he has enough.*] It's no use. [*His shoulder jerks.*] I'm hungry! An' I'm gettin' thinner an' thinner all the time. [*He goes to the mirror once more and examines himself, then looks about and strikes at something.*] An' the red ones won't let me alone. G'wan! [*He stares at an invisible something.*] Why won't you let me alone? Say? G'wan! [*He strikes at something, turns and sits down on the bed. Meditatively.*] An' I wanted to live just like other people, an' be happy. I wanted a girl an' a home too, an' now look at me! [*He pauses, then wipes his eyes with the back of his hand.*] I'm not all bad. I've worked an' I've tried to be all right, too. [*Strikes.*] But they won't let me alone! They won't ever do it. G'wan! Get away, I tell you! [*Strikes.*] I ain't right. Look at 'em! Look at 'em! [*He gets up, moves away as if from pursuers; his arm jerks. Stiffening, his expression changing.*] But it's their pretty mouths an' their hair—that's it! It's the way they wear their shirtwaists an' paint their faces! I can't stand it! It's the red ones. It ain't my fault—it's theirs! I can't help myself no more. They make me do it.

[*He grows savage, vigorous. His shoulder jerks.*] Well, I won't die, either. [*Throws down the tubing.*] Why should I? It ain't my fault. I ain't done nothin' much, have I? I couldn't help it, could I? I didn't make myself, did I? [*He stares sternly before him. His shoulder jerks.*] I'll tell 'em that, I will! I'll write it. [*He picks up one of the newspapers, tears off a small corner, fishes about in his coat for a lead pencil, and finding a small bit goes to the dresser and scribbles on the paper, pausing once as he does so to strike. Quotes:*] "I didn't make myself, did I? G'wan!" [*Reaches up and fastens it against the wall alongside the mirror. His shoulder jerks.*] Well, I won't quit yet, either. I'm not all in. G'wan! G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] They ain't got me.

[*He goes to the nail, takes down his hat and coat, and puts them on. As he does so, he hears a noise. He thinks some one is coming up the stairs, goes over and listens. A period of silence follows in which no noise is heard. His shoulder jerks. A newsboy's voice is heard crying.*]

THE NEWSBOY

Extro! Extro! All about Isadore Berchansky! Extro! Extro! [*The voice fades.*]

ISADORE

[*Listening.*]

Huh! I wonder who it is now. I bet they've found somebody else. I better not go out, though. They might know me. [*His shoulder jerks. He goes back to the bed.*] G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] It's the red ones all the time, not the blacks. They won't let me alone—always followin' me around. G'wan! [*Strikes.*] I gotta eat, though. I can't go on this way. I gotta eat or die. [*His shoulder jerks. He moves toward the door.*] I gotta get out o' New York an' get sompin to do, or I gotta quit. It ain't no use. [*Pauses.*] It's the red ones. That's it. They won't let me alone. G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] Nothin' but a cup o' coffee an' a sandwich since Wednesday! [*He sniffs, reaches in his pocket and pulls out some change. His shoulder jerks.*] Eighteen cents! An' I ain't got the strength to earn any more. Look at me! [*He surveys himself in the mirror. His shoulder jerks.*] It's all up with me, I guess. G'wan! [*He strikes at something.*] These papers'll fix me. They're all talkin' about my arm. [*Pauses.*] I wonder why Joe ain't answered my letter, an' Greenbaum, the stiff! [*He gulps.*] G'wan! [*He draws back his arm threateningly.*] I guess he's afraid. Well, that's the way—when you ain't got nothin'.

[*He stiffens and strikes at something. His shoulder jerks.*] Gee, but it's tough, though! All the world goin' on an' happy, an' me——

[*He half sobs, then starts to pick up the gas tube. The sound of steps is heard on the stairs. Hastily he puts away the tube and papers, and straightens up, listening intently. His shoulder jerks. A knock sounds, then another.*]

A VOICE

[*Outside.*]

Mr. Abrams! Mr. Abrams! [ISADORE *does not answer. The door rattles.*] You are in there? I know you're in there! Vy don't you open the door?

ISADORE

[*Stirring.*]

Wait a minute!

[*He goes to the door and opens it slightly. His shoulder jerks.*]

SAMUEL ELKAS

[*A small, dark, restless, inquisitive, ferret-like Jew, clothed in a dirty shirt, open at the neck, and rolled up at the sleeves, a pair of baggy, messy trousers, the suspenders of which are hanging down, and the leg-ends of which*

gather in folds above his instep. He wears slippers. His hair is tousled, his face and hands are damp and dirty.]

Good efternoon, Mr. Abrams. So, you are not verking yet? Hev you my rent for me?

ISADORE

[*Taking off his hat and rubbing his stomach and hair.*]

I've been sick to-day. I couldn't look, very well. But I've got a job, now, for to-morrow. [*His shoulder jerks. He turns it away from* ELKAS.] A friend o' mine is goin' to give it to me. By to-morrow night I'll have your rent for you.

[*He starts to strike at something, but pauses.*]

ELKAS

[*With a gesture.*]

To-morrow! To-morrow! Alvays to-morrow! Vell, if I don't get it by den, you vill haf to get out. You t'ink ve verk to give rooms free to people? [ISADORE'S *shoulder jerks.*]. Vot is it vith your arm? Is it hurt?

ISADORE

[*Savagely.*]

No, no, no! Nothin'! [*He starts to close the door.*] I'll get it for you to-morrow, sure. [*His*

shoulder jerks.] Can't you trust me till then? I'll pay you, sure. [*His shoulder jerks. He pushes the door nearly to.*] I can get a dollar an' a half. It's only a week yesterday.

[*As the two stand there speaking, a little girl of nine or ten, dark, elfish, pretty, appears and stands behind* ELKAS, *who is evidently unaware of her presence. She peeps around as if anxious to be neither heard nor seen. She has on a worn blue gingham dress, sleeveless and cut low at the neck, which is very soiled and torn. Her legs as well as her arms are bare and dirty, and her hair is disheveled and not very clean, but she has the charm of sprightliness and curiosity.*]

ELKAS

[*Lifting his hands.*]

Vell, vy dontcha, den? I kent, an' I need it bed enough. Ve haf to verk, too.

[*He gesticulates antagonistically.*]

ISADORE

[*Crossly.*]

Well, I'll have it for you by to-morrow, I tell you —by six o'clock. [*His shoulder jerks. He looks to one side as if to strike at something.*] Don't bother

me no more to-day, will you! I'll pay you then, sure.

[*He pushes at the door as if to close it.*]

ELKAS

[*Pushing at his side of the door to hold it open.*]

By six o'clock! By six o'clock! Den, if you don't pay, I lose Sunday, too! Vy not by noon?

ISADORE

All right, by noon. I'll get it to you as soon as I get it—by noon I'll send it over. [*His shoulder jerks.*] You'll get it, all right. Please don't worry me now. [*Aside.*] G'wan!

ELKAS

[*Doubtfully, moving back. The child disappears.*]

Vell, if it vuz some von else, I vouldn't do it. Since you're sick, I'll let it go to-day as a favor to you.

[*He goes out.* ISADORE *closes the door, listens, then after a time looks up.*]

ISADORE

[*His shoulder jerks.*]

Yes, the pig! To-morrow I'll pay him—to-morrow—huh!—I won't be alive to-morrow! G'wan!

[*Strikes at something.*] It's the red ones, that's it. They won't let me alone. A lot of difference it'll make by to-morrow! I might as well quit now. I gotta. It's the red ones. I can't get away. He saw my arm. [*Goes over to the bed.*] Gee, it's a wonder he didn't connect me! G'wan away! [*Strikes at something. With a frown.*] Maybe he did! [*Takes out the rubber tube, fastens one end of it over the gas jet and carries the other end to the head of the bed and rests it there. His shoulder jerks. He takes off his hat and coat, then gets out the pencil and begins feverishly to scribble on the wall at the head of the bed. As he writes he talks.*] "Parole—officer—Gavan—is—a—damned—liar." G'wan! [*Strikes.*] "He—told—me—not—to—call——" G'wan! [*Strikes.*] "—any—more. He—never—told—me—to—sign—any— papers ——" [*Stops, frowns, and stares at something.*] G'wan! [*Strikes. Writes.*] "It's—the—red—ones—not—the—blacks. He — told — me — he'd — send——" [*Stops and frowns.*] G'wan! "—them—to—me—in—a—blank—envelope——" [*Pauses and thinks. Frowns, then writes.*] "Seven—is—right. Don't—cry——" [*Strikes.*] G'wan!

[*A tap is heard at the door. Instantly he stiffens, removes the tube from the gas jet, tiptoes to the bed and puts it under, then draws*

a small knife from his pocket and listens. The tap is repeated. He does not answer.]

A SOFT LOW VOICE

Mr. Ab'ams! Mr. Ab'ams!

ISADORE

[*Relaxing, and putting back the knife.*]
Yes?

THE VOICE

[*Softly.*]
Oh, Mr. Ab'ams! It's Hagar!

ISADORE

[*Gruffly.*]
Yes? Whaddy ya want?
[*His shoulder jerks.*]

THE VOICE

[*Sweetly.*]
I've got sompin for you, Mr. Ab'ams. [*He opens the door and looks out. The little girl is there. She has an apple and is holding it out to him.*] Want this?

ISADORE

[*Starting. His shoulder jerks.*]
Oh, it's you, is it? What made you wanta bring it to me? [*His expression changes from one of fear*

and doubt to one of smiling sympathy. He forgets to strike. A weird smile passes over his face.] Come on in.

[*Takes her by the arm and pulls her in.*]

HAGAR

[*Uncertainly.*]

I don't think I'd better. He'll scold if he ketches me up here. I'm not allowed.

[*Looks about as if to see if any one is coming. She laughs.*]

ISADORE

[*Warmly.*]

Aw, come on. [*His shoulder jerks. His face grimaces oddly. Over his shoulder.*] G'wan!

HAGAR

[*Looking at him and smiling.*]

I heard what you said. You said you ain't got no money, an' I felt sorry, so I thought I'd bring you this. [*She holds up the apple.*] Didn't you see me? I was behind papa. [*She laughs.* ISADORE *shakes his head. He looks at her greedily, staring at her arms and bare feet. His expression changes. He leers and smooths her arms and neck. His shoulder jerks. He shivers.*] Don't you know me?

ISADORE

[*Darkly.*]

Sure. You're Hagar Elkas, ain't you? [*She nods.*] You like me, Hagar, don't you? Somebody likes me, anyhow. [*To one side.*] G'wan!

HAGAR

[*Nodding her head and smiling.*]

Uh-huh! Who you talkin' to?

[*She looks around behind him.*]

ISADORE

Nobody! Nobody!

[*He controls an inclination to strike.*]

HAGAR

I seen you goin' out this mornin'. [*Looking at the papers on the floor.*] Wotcha doin' with all them papers—lookin' for a job?

ISADORE

[*Looking about apprehensively, then stooping to gather up the papers from the floor and stuff them in a bureau drawer. He smiles wanly.*]

That's right! You've got it! I'm lookin' for a job. [*His shoulder jerks.*] Come on up here. [*He*

picks her up and seats her on the bureau and begins to trifle with her hair and feel her knees. His shoulder jerks. Again his expression changes to a leer. His face contorts. He glances over her, then looks up, sees himself in the mirror. Pauses. Puts his hand to his head and begins to back away. As he does so, a noise is heard in the hall below, a voice calling "HAGAR! HAGAR!" *A door slams. Voices sound, then die away. The voice of a newsboy in the street is heard—"Extro! Extro! Isadore Berchansky—!" Silence.* ISADORE *stares at* HAGAR, *who stares back at him in astonishment.*] Naw! Naw! That's right! I'd better not do that any more! I won't! I can't! It's the red ones, that's it! They won't let me alone. [*His shoulder jerks.*] I'd better quit now before I do, though. I'm crazy, all right. [*He goes to the door and listens, then returns and lifts* HAGAR *down and pushes her toward the door, his shoulder jerking. Roughly.*] Get out, kid! Quick! Quick! Get out, I tell you, before I do sompin! Get out! You don't know me! Can't you see? Quick! Quick! Hurry! [*His manner is very rough. He pushes her out, and as she gives him a frightened glance, slams the door, locks it, and then stands with his back to it, and stares.*] Naw! Naw! I'd better not do that no more! I better go, though, before I kill somebody else! I'm sure to! Poor lit-

tle kid! [*His shoulder jerks. He goes to the bed, pulls off the coverlet and lays it along the crack at the bottom of the door, the while his shoulder jerks. He takes the newspapers out of the drawer and making twists of them, begins stuffing them into the cracks along the sides and between the window and in the keyhole. As he works he talks.*] Mom, you'll understand this. You know me. It's for the best. I couldn't help it. You'll understand. They won't let me alone. G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] Don't cry! I'm no good, anyhow. I never was. [*His shoulder jerks.*] You know that. [*He wipes his eyes.*] Be good to Masha. Tell her I always thought she was the best of 'em all. [*He pauses and stares at something, moves as if to strike, but subsides without doing it.*] She knows I like her. [*His shoulder jerks.*] An' pop! Poor old pop! [*He stops, picks up another bit of newspaper, writes on it and looks about for a suitable place to fasten it, finally sticking it in the mirror frame. His shoulder jerks. He stares curiously at something. Heavily.*] I guess they'll see that, all right. [*His shoulder jerks.*] G'wan! [*Strikes at something, goes over to the bed, takes out the gas tube, fastens one end over the gas jet and taking out his handkerchief stretches it by the corners and ties the tube to it. Looking over his shoulder.*] G'wan! [*Then he gets*

his coat, spreads it over the window with pins, and goes back to the bed, picks up the other end of the tube and stands there, his shoulder jerking from time to time. The curtain begins to descend.] Well, I guess it's all day for me, all right. They won't let me be. G'wan! [*Strikes at something.*] I ain't all bad, an' I don't wanta die, but—oh——[*He sits down.*]

CURTAIN

Scene 2

The same as Scene 1, *except that it is now about eleven in the morning of the next day. Everything is as before, except that the window and door are open, the gas tubing hanging straight from the jet to the floor.* Isadore's *hat and coat are lying on one corner of the bed. On the floor in different places are the twists of paper used in stuffing the window and keyhole. Plainly outlined on the bed under a sheet is a body. A stout Irish policeman is standing in the doorway. Another is outside. Three reporters are grouped together near the window, examining a bit of paper.*

FIRST POLICEMAN

Ye'll be tellin' thim to bring his father or some one, eh?

SECOND POLICEMAN

That's right.

[*Exit. The first policeman strolls over to where the three reporters stand, and looks over their shoulders.*]

ARMSBY

[*Reporter for the Herald. He is short and stout and florid, with hair growing over his coat collar. In one pocket are various newspapers.*]

Say, this'll create a real row, this will! It's Berchansky, all right—no doubt of it. Look at what he says here [*reads, the other two looking over his shoulder*]—"I'm guilty, and I'm insane, caused by the beautiful make-ups of girls that has set me very passionate. Don't cry." [*He looks up with a quizzical light in his eyes.*] Whaddy ya know about that! [*Smiles.*] No one gets the two thousand reward, do they? That was for catching him alive, wasn't it?

LEACH

[*Reporter for the Times. Young—about twenty-two—tall, slender, cynical, very neat, a pair of large gold-rimmed glasses on his nose.*]

Yes, that was it. No one gets the two thousand now. Who found him?

[*He stares about the room and at the bed.*]

THE POLICEMAN

Sure, the landlord here. Elkas is his name. He's gone to the station now. But he don't know it's

Berchansky yet. No more did I till that young felly from the *American* come in. He took some of these papers away with him, I'm thinkin'. I was standin' downstairs waitin' fer me partner to come up, when who should come runnin' out but the landlord here, a-yellin' at the top of his voice. Sure, I thot he was killed himself, I did. "What's ailin' ye?" I says. "A man's moirdered in me house," he says; "he's killed himself," he says. So I blows me whistle an' beats me sthick, an' at that I runs up here, an' here he was, a-lyin' there with that tube in 'is mouth, an' that pilly over 'is head. "Come, now," I says, shakin' 'im, "come out o' that!" but he was dead, all right.

QUINN

[*Reporter for the Sun. Irish, short, slender, red-headed, quick, almost waspish in his speech, about thirty-five years of age, and with a slight brogue.*]

He didn't know it was Berchansky, ye say?

THE POLICEMAN

Divil a bit. It was the little felly from the *American* that was in here just ahead o' ye b'ys that told me that. He told me naht to say naathin', but since ye've found out fer yerselves, sure, there's no haarm in tellin' ye. [*Grins.*] Sure, ye'll be afther sayin'

that Aafficer McKagg was called in, an' that I was here dooin' me dooty [*he pokes* QUINN *on the elbow*]? Sure, ye'll be afther knowin' how to fix it up.

QUINN

Sure! Sure! That's all right! What's the full name? [*He begins to write it.*] If that landlord had only known yesterday, he might have had that two thousand. Say!

MC KAGG

[*Solemnly.*]

By God, you're right! Think ave him losin' that! [*He looks over their shoulders as they write.*] Aafficer Thomas McKagg, twelfth precinct.

LEACH

ARMSBY

[*Together, as they show their papers to* MC-KAGG.]

That's right, isn't it—M-c-K-a-g-g?

MC KAGG

Yes, that's it.

[*He smiles gratefully.*]

QUINN

I suppose the father'll be down here pretty soon, now. Have any detectives been here yet?

MC KAGG

Divil a waan. I'm doubtin' if they know it yet. This'll be afther makin' thim sorer still.

QUINN

[*Jubilantly.*]

A fine lot of detectives they have in this town! Say! Two hundred of 'em on the job, and they haven't turned up a thing—not waan. We've turned up everything that's been turned up so far—the mother, the sister, and now this poor divil.

[*He waves a hand toward the bed.*]

LEACH

[*Briskly.*]

Whaddy ya know! Isn't that a scream—the whole force looking for him—and we newspaper men find him!

[*He laughs.*]

ARMSBY

[*Who is going about looking for other evidence —softly to* LEACH.]

Sure, they're all no good, a lot of hoboes. [*He sees something on the floor and picks it up. Starts to conceal it, but sees* QUINN *and the officer looking at him, and opens it.*] Here's some writing. [*He reads. As he does so, the other two come to his side.*] "Tell—mother—I—should—have—died—two

—years—ago. So—let—her—forget—as—though —it's—two—years—already."

[*He takes out his notebook and begins to jot it down.*]

QUINN

[*Approaching with his pencil and paper.*]

Not bad, that! Not bad! A nice bit o' sentiment. [*He begins to write.*] The poor divil was crazy, all right. Sure enough! I begin to feel sorry for him. He couldn't help it, I suppose.

LEACH

You think not? Oh, I don't know. Let me have that first paper, Armsby, will you? I want to copy it.

[ARMSBY *gives it to him.*]

ARMSBY

[*Going to the bed, picks up a paper containing* ISADORE'S *picture, turns back the sheet and compares the two.* LEACH *follows.*]

It's him, all right. I see it now. The very fellow!

LEACH

[*Excitedly, looking at the wall above* ISADORE'S *head.*]

Say, here's something else! He's written all over the place! [ARMSBY *looks up.*] He must have been

clean crazy! [*Reads slowly.*] "Parole—officer—Gavan—is—a—damned—liar. Go—'way! He—told—me—not—to—call—any—more. He—never—told—me—to—sign—any—papers. It's—the—reds—not—the—blacks. He—told—me—he'd—send—'em—to—me—in—a—blank—envelope. Seven—is—right. Don't—cry. It's—no—use—much! Ha! Ha! Yes. I'm—a—prize-fighter!"

[*Takes out his pencil and paper, as does* ARMSBY. *They begin to write.* QUINN *comes over.*]

QUINN

What's this, now? Let me see! [*Reads the writing over their shoulders.*] What d'ye think of that? What d'ye s'pose he means by those things, anyhow—the reds and the blacks? [*He writes also.*] He must have been crazy, sure enough. That's quairer than the last, that. We aaht to get his faather down here to identify him. The papers are interested in him.

LEACH

That's right. Only, the officer says he thinks some one from the *American* has gone for him.

MC KAGG

[*Leaning against the door, his hands behind him.*]

Make yerselves aisy on that score. That little

felly from the *American* has gaan, aal right. He told me naht to let any waan else in till he come back with him, if I could help it. Of course, he's a nice little felly, but I couldn't do that. Aal the papers have a right here. [*He smiles.*] Vallally, that's me partner, has just been afther tellin' headquarters, an' they'll be gettin' him here in no time, too. They're sure to bring 'im, even if the little felly don't.

[*He straightens up and puts his thumbs in his belt.*]

ARMSBY

We'd better not be too sure of that. He might not bring him back until we're out of here. One of us ought to go, I'm thinking. [*Then, as* LEACH *picks up another bit of paper from the floor and unfolds it, and then attempts to slip it into his pocket.*] What's that?

[*He comes over.*]

LEACH

[*A little shame-facedly.*]

Nothing much, I guess.

[*Takes it out and unfolds it.*]

ARMSBY

Let's see it. [QUINN *comes over.*] It's fifty-fifty on all this, isn't it?

QUINN

Sure! You're not goin' to hold anything out, are you?

LEACH

[*Irritably.*]

Not at all! Not at all! Who's holding anything out? Can't I see it first if I find it? [*Opens it.*] Look at this! [*Reads.*] "This is to my dear mother who I am always homesick for, and same to rest and pop, whose word I am taking by doing this. Go 'way! Maybe you think it's easy. Well, maybe it is. I don't know. It's the reds, not the blacks. Mostly red. They won't let me alone. I figure easiest of my own. I want to say if I don't die this way I'll take my medicine just the same. Fields, carriages, four trees. Don't cry. My last job was in pants manafactor at 61 Norfolk. He owes me two days' work. I ain't et in three. Please secure pay and give to my dear mother who is very poor and for truth my mind ain't right. Go 'way! My oldest sister has lots of money and Greenbaum and don't help as she should, or Rae either. Eleven buttons—four seams—and the bottoms turned up. I'm sorry to cause all this trouble to my neighbor in particular, but all he's gotta do is call a cop! Go 'way! Go 'way! Gavan is a liar! Tell mother I'm really guilty

and she'll not cry her eyes out—heart. Poor mom! You think I'm innocent, even yet, don't you? Mothers is wonders! Great! I am, too, only I ain't made right. Red, not black. We ain't made right—not all of us—all wrong. It's their pretty mouths an' hair an' the way they walk an' them shirtwaists so fine—that's it! Sorry. I got crazy like I often do, an' you can't blame me or nobody else. It don't do things right always. Can you blame a man when he ain't right?

"Isadore Berchansky."

ARMSBY

[*Looking up*]
Tough, eh?

QUINN

You're right, it's tough. Ye never can tell about these poor divils, as [*he points to the letter*] ye can see by that. Here's the whole city runnin' him down an' he may not have been as bad as the people have been thinkin'. Life's a pretty stiff thing at times.

LEACH

[*Going to the bureau and smoothing out the paper he has found, preparatory to copying it.*]

Oh, I don't know about that. I wonder sometimes just how crazy some of them are. I know a doctor who has made a study of these cases at Johns Hopkins, and he isn't so sure that they deserve so much sympathy. I can't understand it myself, wanting to attack a little girl like that, especially when he might interest a grown girl. The public wouldn't feel one-fiftieth as terrible if he had tried to attack a grown one instead of this little kid. But a little girl! And to torture her! Hell, you might as well talk about having sympathy for a mad dog. What I can't understand, though, is how it comes that a man like that should be allowed to walk about the streets here in New York free—not a person to touch him. And he had tried to attack another little girl two years ago. Why shouldn't his parents have done something about him then? He himself says he should have been dead two years ago. Well, why didn't they lock him up then? What's the big idea, letting a fellow like that run at large?

ARMSBY

[*Thoughtfully and apologetically.*]

Oh, I know, but then you can't always tell, either. Everything isn't on the surface in this world. His parents might not have thought him as bad as he was, or they might have been sorry for him. Sup-

posing you had a brother like that—then what? Would you want him locked up right away? People don't like to break up their own homes, especially parents. They feel too bad about it. At the same time, they're likely to think he'll get better. A single offense doesn't al'ways prove that a man's crazy, especially in a case like this. He might change.

QUINN

You're right there. The public doesn't understand them yet. I've been readin' up on these cases for some time, an' from what I can make out they're no more guilty than any other person with a disease. Did ye know, ayther ave ye, that there's something they've called *harmones* which the body manufactures an' which is poured into the blood streams of every waan ave us which excites us to the m'aning ave beauty an' thim things—"sensitizes" is the word they use. Now if a felly is so constituted that he has more ave that an' less ave somethin' else—somethin' which balances him a little an' makes him less sensitive to the beauty of women or girls—he's likely to be like that. He can't help it. There's something in him that pushes him on in spite of himself. This felly's letter says so. I believe if the public knew more about these cases it might be able to catch some of these fellies earlier an' begin to treat 'em

or put 'em away somewhere where they'd come out aal right. They're nalit aal bad—that's one thing sure, as ye can see by this. [*He points to the letter Leach has been reading and is still holding.*]

LEACH

[*Superiorily.*]

Oh, all right. Just the same, this business of sympathizing with these people can be carried too far, I tell you. When I was at Cornell we made a study of some of these fellows. They have a pretty fine psychiatric laboratory there. We studied dozens of such cases. In every one we found that however feeble-minded a fellow like that might actually be, or queer, still, ordinarily, you couldn't tell it, you know, and often he was able to do better if he wanted to. They look just like other people.

QUINN

[*Irritably, and yet lightly.*]

Ave course! Ave course! What taalk have ye? Man, ye don't mane to say ye went to Cornell to find that out, do ye? It's in a hundred books. Haven't ye ever read Havelock Ellis or Kraft-Ebbing? They give thousands ave cases—thousands.

[*He takes the letter from Armsby and begins to write.*]

LEACH

[*Testily.*]

Sure I've read 'em. Of course. What do you think? What makes me so tired, though, is your taking up for these fellows as though they were deserving of nothing but sympathy. I don't see that so much sympathy is to be wasted on 'em, really. How about the little girl he killed? Her life was as good to her as his was to him. And I notice that fellows like that are nearly always shrewd enough to take care of themselves and get what they want. Take this Berchansky, there, now. [*He nods towards the bed.*] He was clever enough to lure that little girl to that empty apartment in some way. You can't say that that was so very fine. You can't have too much sympathy for them, I tell you. They ought to be watched, and at the first sign shut up for good—that's what I say. It's just as well that they are hounded in this way. It has to be so.

[*As he talks, Armsby, who has been prowling about looking for other things but now scenting an argument, draws near.*]

QUINN

[*Stopping his writing and coming directly under Leach's chin, staring up at him, argumentatively.*]

Who's denyin' it, I'd like to know? Me? What ye say is aal true enough, and I'm naht sayin' that he shouldn't have been locked up long ago if they could have caught him—I think he should have—but what makes me tired in you an' others an' the papers is all this shoutin' about human tigers lurkin' on the East Side an' everywhere else, men without a spark ave anything but evil in 'em—plain murderers—an' doin' naathin' aal day long but lie in wait for little girls, to kill 'em. Ye'd think there was only waan side to the story. Ye'd think from the papers ave the past six weeks that this felly was aal wolf, naathin' but murder an' rape in his mind, a sane, calculatin' villain turned to this sort ave thing for the fun of it only—naht a poor, crazy wastrel like this, without a place to go an' no way ave gettin' himself anything ave any kind. If he was such a divil, what was he doin' workin' for a dollar a day—an' naht gettin' his pay, at that? Now, for aal ye've been to Cornell—an' I don't doubt ye learned a lot there—there's another side to this, an' ye're just the waan to know it if ye've been there. People judge these fellies solely by their acts, when as a matter ave fact they aaht to take into account the things which make up their natures an' dispositions. This felly could no more help bein' what he was than a fly can help bein' a fly an' naht an elephant, an'

that's naht at aal. Nature is deeper an' stronger than anything we know. An' by that I'm naht sayin' that the human race hasn't the right to defend itself from this sort ave felly. It has, an' does. What I'm taalkin' about is aal this palaver in the papers about wolves an' divils. Why, man, by the papers ave the last six weeks ye'd think the streets were full ave demons in the shape ave men. Ye've seen 'em arrest at least a hundred men for even smilin' at a child or ahfferin' it a stick ave candy. And now look at 'im. There he is—hungry an' dirty an' thin an' hidden away in this pe-latial room, an' there's that letter to his mother tellin' her not to cry an' that he aaht to have been dead two years ago, an' that he's naht right. Ave course he wasn't right, the poor divil, an' perhaps no waan knew it better than his mother, ayther, an' that's why he writes to her. [*Leach shakes his head argumentatively.*] An', me boy, while we're on this subject, let me tell ye just waan thing more; I'm an older man than ye by fourteen years an' I've seen a little somethin' ave life that maybe ye haven't seen yet, anyhow. Don't be so cocksure in your judgments of who are the good an' who are the bad in this world. Facts an' proofs are naht aal on the surface, by any means, as Armsby here was aafter sayin'. Ye were sayin' a while ago that he aaht to have taken a grown woman

or girl. How do ye know whether any girl or woman would give him a single look or no, let alone a second waan? But supposin' ye were like him—hungry an' tortured by their pretty mouths an' their hair an' the way they walk an' their shirtwaists so fine—I believe that's what he says here [*he looks at the letter*]—then what? Are ye sure ye'd do so very different from what he did, driven by the things that were drivin' him?

LEACH

Oh, I don't know. I might not, of course.

QUINN

Ye're tootin', ye might naht, nor any other man in the same state an' place. Now, I wouldn't have a single word to say ave this case if it weren't for all the noble palaverin' that's been goin' on in an' out ave the papers, in the churches an' everywhere else. Everybody seems to know exactly just what a low, horrible scoundrel he was without a spark ave decency in him. Well, it just so happens that I've been studyin' these very kinds ave cases for years, an' I know what I'm taalkin' about. Aal men are naht balanced or normal be their own free will an' say-so, any more than they're free an' aqual in life, an' that's naht at aal. They're naht aal endowed with

the power or the will to do an' select, aal the rules ave the copybooks to the contrary nahtwithstandin'. Some are so constituted mentally an' physically that they can't do otherwise than as they do, an' that's what ye never can get through the average felly's brain, nor through the average newspaper's, ayther. Most people have a few rules, a pattern, an' everybody's supposed to be like that. Well, they're naht. An' naathin' will ever make 'em exactly alike, ayther —ayther aal good or aal bad, or a little ave waan or the other, accordin' to anybody's theory. Nature don't work that way. An' nature makes people, me young friend, me an' you [*he taps him on the chest*], an' every waan else, an' she don't aalways make us right ayther, by a damned sight. Some people don't aalways have aal they waant mentally or physically —if they did I'd be a millionaire to-day—nayther can they aalways do as they'd like to, or aaht to, aal theories to the contrary nahtwithstandin'. Sometimes they're made to do things—lots ave thim—by forces over which they have no control. [*Leach stirs argumentatively.*] Man, ye're naht goin' to deny that? Sometimes I think we're naht unlike those formulæ they give ye in a chemical laboratory—if ye're made up right, ye work right; if ye're naht, ye don't, an' that's aal there is to it—laa or no laa. An' another thing I'm tellin' ye, me young friend,

an' I'd like ye to think it over from time to time, whether ye like it or naht—that Dennis Quinn said it—an' that is that laa is merely somethin' that forces people to do what they don't waant to do whether they will or no, naht somethin' that aalways shows 'em how to do it—ye get me? Remember that, me young friend. I'm tellin' ye. If ye waant to come out exactly right in this world, which nobody ever does, ye waant to be pairfectly balanced, or nearly that—an' few are that. It's more luck than anythin' else, an' that's true, too. Now ye were sayin' a while ago that ye can't understand why a man like that should be attackin' a little girl, unless he were a low, vile creature, even if he wasn't balanced quite right—but I can. If ye'd ever made a study ave the passion ave love in the sense that Freud an' some others have ye'd understand it well enough. It's a great force about which we know naathing as yet an' which we're just beginnin' to look into—what it manes, how it affects people.

LEACH

Oh, well, I'm ready to admit all that. Let's cut this, anyhow. We haven't got time.

[*The voice of a newsboy sounds: "Extro! Extro! All about Isadore Berchansky!"*]

ARMSBY

[*Energetically.*]

Yes, fellows, you'd better cut the argument and make copies of this. Look around! Look around! The bull'll soon be here! Then they'll be wanting to shut everything off.

[*He opens all the drawers and looks under the bureau. Quinn goes over to the body and feels in the pockets. He looks under the bed and picks up a collar, and starts to conceal it. Leach examines more of the walls. A step is heard on the stair. McKagg looks down.*]

MC KAGG

I dunno who this may be. It's the central men now, I'm thinkin', aal right. Yes, it's them. There's three ave thim. Better put those things away if ye waant thim.

[*Enter Detectives* McGranahan, Harsh *and* Skumm. *They are typical sleuths—very wide-eyed, very dull, very suspicious, and very secretive. Detective-fashion, they keep their hats on, even while bending over the dead. They swagger into the room, looking about as if each detail might contain a secret. They look at* Leach *and* Armsby

copying, then approach the bed. As they do, they greet the newspaper men familiarly, who eye them askance, but return the salutation genially.]

MC GRANAHAN

[*Turning back the sheet and eyeing the face of* ISADORE.]

Well, we've caught him at last, eh? So he quit, eh? The poor nut! Crazy, I hear!

[*He looks around loftily at the newspaper men.*]

SKUMM

[*Equally superior.*]

Gas! Whaddy ya know!

[*He looks at the gas jet and the rubber tube.* QUINN *nudges* ARMSBY, *who eyes him without smiling.*]

HARSH

[*As* MCGRANAHAN *pulls back the sheet.*]

Pretty tough-lookin' mug, eh?

[*They turn to the newspaper men, who are looking at the letter.*]

MC GRANAHAN

What's that? Find anything much to identify him by, boys?

QUINN

[*Who has a paper in his hand.*]

It's a letter to his mother. We'll give it to you after. They're a dozen things about the place—letters on the walls, and everywhere.

SKUMM

[*Sarcastically, with a crude attempt at humor.*]

I don't suppose there was any joolry or anything like that on him? [*He smiles wisely.*]

LEACH

[*Irritably.*]

Why don't you search him? There he is.

HARSH

We will, in a minute. Who was the first to find him, d'ye know?

ARMSBY

[*Pleasantly.*]

The landlord, I think. We didn't get here first. He doesn't know it's Berchansky yet, though. [*Aside, to* QUINN.] Wait'll he hears he's lost that two thousand reward!

[QUINN *lifts his hands.* HARSH *goes over to*

McKAGG. SKUMM *goes to the head of the bed.*]

SKUMM

[*Surveying the scrawl about* OFFICER GAVAN.]
Knockin' even before he dies, eh? Whaddy ya know! A swell chance he had to get away, with all o' us after him!

[*A new noise is heard on the stair. Enter an Inspector of Police in uniform, a sergeant of detectives*, ELKAS, HAGAR ELKAS, *a fourth reporter who shows his badge to* McKAGG, *and after them various onlookers and curiosity mongers from the building and the street, whom* McKAGG *pushes back. The Inspector and Sergeant make their way to the bedside.*]

ELKAS

[*Excitedly, to* McKAGG.]
Vuz it Berchansky yet? Oi! Oi!

MC KAGG

Man, aare ye just findin' that out now?

THE INSPECTOR

[*Brusquely, turning to the crowd.*]
Don't let all these people in here, Officer. Only

the ones who have business here. Drive them out! Drive them out!

[*He looks at the detectives, who salute him.*]

MC KAGG

[*Vigorously.*]

Get back! Get back! What'll ye be afther waantin' in here, anyhow?

[*He admits* ELKAS, HAGAR, *and the fourth reporter. The latter joins the three.*]

THE INSPECTOR

[*Surrounded by detectives.*]

This is the man, is it? Well, that's one trouble over, anyhow. Who found him?

MC GRANAHAN

[*Sycophantically.*]

The landlord here, chief—Elkas is his name, I believe.

ELKAS

[*Pushing forward.*]

Here I am. It is Berchansky, you say? Vere do I get de reward?

THE INSPECTOR

Aw, don't get excited. There's no reward in this case. That was for catching him alive. Can't you see he's dead? [ELKAS's *face falls.*]

ELKAS

Ach, my house! My gas! He owes me for t'ree veeks' rent!

THE INSPECTOR

[*Paying no attention to* ELKAS]
Where's his old man? Anybody gone for him? We ought to get him here to identify him. [*Turning to* MCKAGG.] When'd they find him, Officer?

MC KAGG

About nine this mornin', chief. The landlord caalled me in.

THE INSPECTOR

What about his old man? Anybody gone for him?

MC KAGG

Aafficer Vallally wint an hour ago. [*A noise is heard.*] I'm thinkin' he's comin' now, sir.

MC GRANAHAN

[*Ingratiatingly.*]

Not a doubt in the world, chief. There are letters from him all over the place—on the walls, everywhere.

[*He points to the writing at the head of the bed.*]

THE INSPECTOR

Where are they? Let's see some of them.

[ARMSBY *brings one forward. The Inspector takes it and reads. The noise at the head of the stairs increases.* BERCHANSKY, *accompanied by an officer and several plain-clothes men, appears in the doorway.* MCKAGG *makes way for them.*]

MC GRANAHAN

[*Softly.*]

Here's his old man, now, chief.

[*The* INSPECTOR *turns to look.* BERCHANSKY, *very pale, very worn, pauses at the door a moment, then, pushed and led by the detectives, comes forward. A hush falls over the room.* MCGRANAHAN *turns down the sheet, which has been pulled up, and* BERCHANSKY

looks at the corpse in silence. A pause ensues.]

BERCHANSKY

[*Heavily and sadly, folding his hands over his breast.*]

Yes, dat's my son. Dat's my boy. [*Pauses, and looks around.*] Gas? Vell, it's better den de oder. [*Pauses again, while the silence endures.*] Dat he should end so! [*He wipes his eyes.*] It is too bed! [*He shakes his head and looks around, again.*] It is strange. Four years ago ve lived next door.

THE INSPECTOR OF POLICE

[*Coming alongside.*]

You're sure it's your son, are you, Mr. Berchansky?

BERCHANSKY

Yes. Yes. I know. [*He turns as if to go.*]

ELKAS

[*Who has crowded forward, speaking with irritation.*]

So he vuz your son, vuz he? Such a scoundrel! He owes me for t'ree veeks' rent, yet. An' *he* should come by *my* house! He tells me his name is Abrams. I should lose two t'ousand dollars! If I know, he

vouldn't 'a' been here long. I t'ought he acted strange.

BERCHANSKY

[*Humbly.*]

I vill pay! I vill pay—only not to-day, please. I heven't so much.

ELKAS

[*Angrily, while the police stare at him tolerantly.*]

An' you! vy shouldn't you bring your children up right? If you should bring him up right—if you should keep him off de streets, den he vouldn't do such a t'ing!

BERCHANSKY

[*Slowly, with suppressed emotion, as the police push* ELKAS *back.*]

My friend, hev you children?

ELKAS

[*Defiantly.*]

Yes!

BERCHANSKY

[*In a quavering voice.*]

Den you should know. Vy pull at de walls of my house? Dey are already down!

CURTAIN